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No 408

## CHRISTMAS CAROL.

BY ELEN E. REXFORD.

The bells are ringing, clear and sweet,  
Beneath the adorning angels' feet,  
And in our hearts are glad thoughts born  
By joyous bells of Christmas morn.  
For in a manger, poor and low,  
Was born the Christ-child, years ago,  
And shepherds, on the hills afar,  
Were told the tidings by a star.  
Oh, ring, glad bells, ring loud and sweet,  
The song which ages shall repeat,  
Which angels sung on Christmas still,  
Of Peace on Earth, to Men Good Will.

Oh, Christ-child, in a manger born,  
The stars sang on thy birthday-morn,  
While, ere thou camest, thy mother's breast,  
The wise men sought thy place of rest,  
And peace descended on the earth,  
In honor of thy holy birth.  
Ah! thou hast died for us, and them  
Who hailed thee king at Bethlehem.  
Oh, ring, glad bells, ring loud and sweet,  
The song which ages shall repeat,  
Which angels sung on Christmas still,  
Of Peace on Earth, to Men Good Will.

Oh, song, a-down the centuries rolled,  
Oh, song, which never can grow old!  
Oh, Christ-child, born a cross to bear  
That we, at last, a crown might wear—  
Let us, like shepherds, to thy feet  
Bring love, as tribute-offering meet,  
And worship thee, while angels sing  
In praise of Jesus Christ, our king.  
Oh, ring, glad bells, ring loud and sweet,  
The song which ages shall repeat,  
Which angels sung on Christmas still,  
Of Peace on Earth, to Men Good Will.

## Wife or Widow?

OR,

### ETHELIND ERLE'S ENEMY.

BY RETT WINWOOD.

AUTHOR OF "A GIRL'S HEART," "A DANGEROUS WOMAN," "THE WRONGED HEIRESS," ETC.

#### CHAPTER I.

##### THE FIRST BRIDAL EVE.

"What do you think of marriage?  
I take it as those that deny purgatory;  
It locally contains a heaven or hell;  
There's no third place in it."—WINTER.

A MYSTICAL stir was in the house. Beautiful  
exotics decorated hall and corridor, and flanked  
the grand central staircase with bud, blossom  
and arches of living green. The air seemed  
heavy with the perfume of violets and helio-  
tropes, and at the far end of the spacious draw-  
ing-room hung the traditional marriage-bell,  
pure, perfect and stainless as though fairy  
fingers had fashioned and suspended it.

It was Ethelind Erle's wedding-eve. Glen-  
oaks, the lovely country-seat of her guardian,  
Colonel Philip Falkner, had been profusely de-  
corated for the occasion. Most of the guests  
were already in the house, making the scene  
brilliant with their rich toilets and glittering  
jewels.

The windows stood wide open, their hangings  
of delicate lace swaying gently in the soft May  
breeze that crept up from the placid bosom of  
the bay. The moon stood tremulously on the east-  
ern horizon, as if eager yet half-afraid to pour  
its pearl-white flood over the slumbering hills  
and valleys and the waiting tide that washed  
the amber sand below. Fair as a dream of Eden  
was the scene.

Before a cheval-glass in one of the upper cham-  
bers stood Dolores Gloyne. She was to be bride-  
maid, and wore the traditional white; but her  
olive complexion and usually ruddy cheeks look-  
ed quite ghastly in the brilliant light that per-  
vaded the room. In her shaking fingers she held  
a scented note.

"Come to me in the conservatory, Dolores," it  
said. "You can steal away easily enough in the  
crowd. I must see you alone, and this may be our  
only opportunity." VINCENT.

The young girl crushed the note impatiently  
in her hand.

"I must go," she murmured. "Vincent might  
do something reckless if I refused to see him.  
But it is very wrong to meet him clandestinely  
after the promise grandpapa extorted from me."

Catching up a shawl that lay on one of the  
chairs, she flung it over her shoulders and step-  
ped to the door. There was noise and bustle  
enough in the lower rooms, but the corridor  
seemed deserted; and with a quick-drawn breath  
she fitted down the broad passage.

Near the landing was a small alcove curtained  
with crimson damask. Just as Dolores passed  
this recess, an arm was suddenly thrust out from  
the drapery, and she felt herself drawn forcibly  
forward.

"Is it you, darling?" breathed a low, musical  
voice.

Dolores drew back with a startled exclamation.  
"Raymond—you here!" she uttered, glancing  
into the dark, handsome face so close to her own.  
"You frightened me dreadfully."

The hand fell from her arm.

"I beg your pardon, dear cousin," said the  
young man, in a cold, changed voice. "These  
halls are so confoundingly dark that I mistook  
you for Ethelind. Why do you come stealing  
upon one muffled up like that?"

"I have an errand down-stairs, and my white  
dress seemed so conspicuous."

"Where did you leave Miss Erle?"

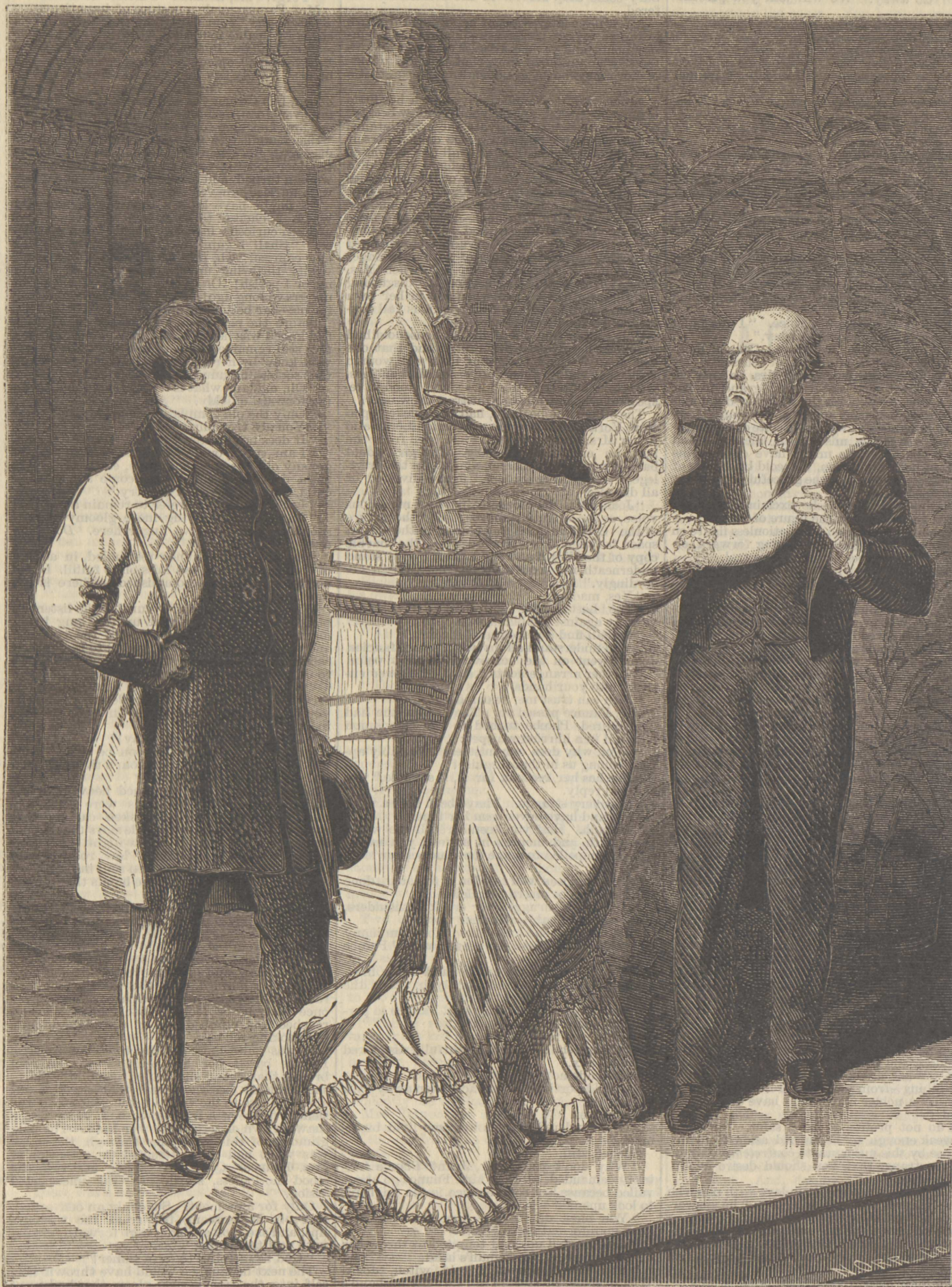
"She is still in her chamber, I suppose. Have  
you any message for her?"

"Thank you—none. I can wait. Another  
hour and she will be my wife. Then I shall have  
no use for go-betweens."

There was so much exultation in his voice that  
Dolores again lifted her eyes quickly. The face  
into which she gazed was magnificent in its  
beauty, and most women found it irresistibly at-  
tractive. But a shiver of repulsion ran over the  
girl. Raymond Challoner was her cousin—at  
most her only living relative; nevertheless, she  
did not altogether trust him.

"I hope you will make Ethelind a good hus-  
band, Raymond," she said, earnestly.

"Am I not an idolatrous lover?"  
Dolores sighed.



"I was so miserable—so unhappy! I meant to say farewell, and then see him no more."

"These fierce, headstrong passions are not the  
ones that endure longest, or that will suffer  
most."

"I would die, if necessary, for my beautiful  
bride. Is not that enough?"

A half-mocking smile curled his lips, and he  
turned impatiently away. Dolores once more  
gathered up her shawl, and ran swiftly on to  
the back staircase. If she wished to see Vincent  
Erle and return before the hour appointed for  
the ceremony, there was no time to lose.

The shortest route to the conservatory lay  
through the large dining-hall, where the wed-  
ding-supper with its flowers, cut-glass and costly  
plate was already laid out. The three or four  
busy attendants scarcely noticed the muffled  
figure that glided, ghost-like, down the long  
avenue between the groaning tables, and disap-  
peared in the cool green shadows beyond. Not  
a single eye followed the girl with curiosity or  
suspicion.

Dolores paused just within the conservatory,  
and was straining her eyes through the per-  
fumed obscurity of the place when a rustling  
sound fell upon her ears, and a man emerged  
from behind a trellis of the luxuriant bignonia.

"How long you were in coming, Dolores!" he  
exclaimed, catching her in his arms.

She laid her cheek against his shoulder, and  
answered with a repressed sob:

"Oh, Vincent! It was wrong for me to come  
at all!"

"Wrong?"

"I promised grandpapa, before leaving home,  
that I would avoid you. Now you have tempt-  
ed me to break my word."

"It was cruel of him to extort such a promise  
from me!" said the young man, indignantly.

"I know he has my best interests at heart.  
Poor grandpapa! It seems base and ungrateful  
to deceive him, when he has done so much for  
me."

A shade of disdain crossed Vincent Erle's  
handsome blonde face.

"You take too grave a view of the offense,"

Dolores, he said. "Egbert Challoner has no  
right to interdict these meetings."

"Remember, he has been like a father to me."

"That is no reason why you should submit to  
him like a slave. He knows that we love each  
other devotedly, and yet he has forbidden me  
the house, and commanded you not to see me.  
And why? Simply because I am poor, and  
therefore not an eligible suitor for your hand.  
It is shameful!"

"Hush!" whispered Dolores, in a shivering  
voice. "Try to bear with him for my sake."

"I have borne too long already."

"Don't speak like that. It pains me to hear  
you. But it is not prudent to linger here. Tell  
me why you sent for me, Vincent, that I may  
return to my own room."

"I believe you are anxious to be rid of me!"  
he said, with a half-sullen exclamation.

"Oh, no, no. But you know as well as I do  
the risk we run in coming here."

There was a moment's silence, and the young  
man drew her still more closely to his side.

"There must be an end of this," he said, in a  
low voice that was scarcely audible. "We seem  
no nearer the consummation of our happiness  
than we were twelve months ago. I have made  
up my mind. When this wedding is once over,  
I shall go to old Mr. Challoner, and make a clean  
breast of everything."

Dolores threw up her hands, a look of real  
terror on her face.

"Oh, Vincent! my heart misgives me. Pro-  
mise me that you will do nothing rash. My  
grandpapa might curse me in his anger, and  
that I could not bear. Wait—be patient a little  
longer."

Her breath caught in hysterical sobs,  
and she would have laid her face on his shoulder  
had he not suddenly pushed her from him.

"Compose yourself," he whispered. "I am  
certain I heard footsteps."

Dolores clung faint and trembling to the  
trellis. After a moment of intense suspense,  
her worst fears were realized. Forth from the

thick shadows thrown by two large stands of  
blossoming plants, stepped the bent figure of a  
haughty old man.

"Grandpapa!" she gasped.

Mr. Egbert Challoner, for it was he, confronted  
her, his face crimson with rage.

"You vixen!" he hissed. "How dared you  
disobey me! How dared you meet this fellow  
in opposition to my wishes?"

She sprang forward and clung to his arm, her  
tears falling fast.

"Do not be angry with me, dear grandpapa!"  
she pleaded. "I was so miserable—so unhappy!  
How could I keep my word with Vincent and  
my own heart tempting me to break it? I meant  
to say farewell, and then see him no more."

Rudely repulsing her, Mr. Challoner turned  
to Vincent Erle.

"What excuse have you to offer for your dis-  
honorable conduct?" he laughingly demanded.

"None," was the cold response. "I have done  
nothing that I should not do over again, under  
like provocation. Let your displeasure be visit-  
ed upon me alone—that is all I ask. It was I  
who tempted Dolores to deceive you."

Mr. Challoner gazed steadily at the young  
man, without speaking, for several seconds.  
Then, contemptuously turning his back on him,  
he grasped the hand of his granddaughter, led  
her back into the dining-hall, and carefully  
closed the door.

"I am surprised that you should betray the  
trust I reposed in you, Dolores," he said, sternly.

"To avoid remark, I consented that you  
should come to Glenoaks and assist at the wed-  
ding of your cousin Raymond. Knowing, as  
you do, in what disfavor I hold Vincent Erle, it  
is strange that you should take a base advantage  
of the situation."

"I know it was very wrong—oh, forgive me."

"You do not deserve to be pardoned."

"I know it. But—but—my heart is broken."

Her head drooped, and she again broke into  
irrepressible sobs. Mr. Challoner stood looking  
at her in sorrowful silence. At length she grew

more composed, and leaning a little toward him,  
said in an eager whisper:

"I wish you would tell me why you are so  
bitterly opposed to Vincent. You never assigned  
any good and sufficient reason for the dislike  
you profess to feel."

"He is not a suitable match for you."

"Because of his poverty?"

"That is one of the reasons."

"You did not oppose Raymond's marriage  
with Vincent's sister, Ethelind."

"True."

The girl's lip took a scornful curve.

"I think I understand the real nature of the  
distinction you would make," she said, almost  
bitterly. "Ethelind was fortunate enough to  
fall heir to her mother's fortune, while poor  
Vincent has nothing. It is merely a question of  
bonds, bank stock and dividends."

"Nay, child, you are mistaken. Ethelind is  
a noble young woman—even the proudest fam-  
ily might feel honored to welcome her to its cir-  
cle. Vincent, unfortunately, does not resemble  
her in character or disposition."

The girl's face suddenly became white and  
drawn as if with pain.

"What do you mean?" she gasped.

"Simply this, that I have no confidence in  
the man, or in his professions. Let that suffice.  
We will speak of him no more. You must give  
him up. I shall not brook a second act of dis-  
obedience."

Turning as he spoke, he left her without an-  
other word. Dolores stood for some moments  
like one stunned. She turned giddily from the  
sight of glittering plate and snowy damask of  
the wedding banquet as if it had sickened her.  
At length she groped her way up the deserted  
staircase, murmuring with livid lips:

"Ah, how little does my grandfather guess of  
the shameful truth! And, God help me! how  
can I ever tell him! I am too miserable to live!  
Dear, dear Vincent! I cannot think evil of you—  
I will not! It would kill me. May God keep  
you true to me—true to yourself!"

#### CHAPTER II.

##### THE UNWILLING SUPPLIANT.

"Is there within thy heart a need  
That mine can not fulfill?  
One chord that any other hand  
Could better wake or still?  
Speak now, lest at some future day  
My whole life wither and decay."  
—MISS PROCTOR.

DOLORES had scarcely regained the shelter of  
her own room, and thrown aside her heavy shawl,  
when slow, dragging steps descended the corri-  
dor. Looking up expectantly as the door swung  
open, she saw the bride-elect, Ethelind Erle,  
totter across the threshold.

"Oh, my poor friend! What brings you  
here?"

Dolores started impulsively forward as she asked  
the question. Whiter than her bridal-robe,  
Ethelind stood before her, her fair oval face  
twisted with pain, and her eyes, so like violets  
in calmer moods, looking straight forward in a  
dreary stare absolutely appalling.

"Hide me!" the poor creature cried at length,  
imploringly. "Dolores, you are my only friend.  
Lock and double-lock the door. I want no one  
but you."

Dolores shoved the bolt into its socket; then,  
returning, she gently took Ethelind's hand and  
drew her to a seat.

"What has happened?" she said, compassion-  
ately. "Tell me all about it!"

"I want to get away—away from him!" cried  
Ethelind, wildly. "I—I—hate him. 'Tis of no  
use struggling against the feeling. It grows  
more and more intense. I believe I am mad to-  
night. My head is burning. Oh, Dolores, pity  
me!"

"I do pity you," was the gentle answer. "Is  
this marriage so extremely distasteful to you?"

"I would rather die than become Raymond  
Challoner's wife."

Dolores sighed, and a heavy weight settled  
upon her heart. She had long suspected that  
Raymond did not possess all the love of the  
bride he had chosen, but this active, intense re-  
pugnance shocked and surprised her.

"Oh, why did you not speak of this before it  
was too late?" she exclaimed.

Ethelind dropped her eyes and shuddered.

"I feel like one just waking from a dream.  
I never fully realized what I had done until to-  
night when I roused up to find myself arrayed  
in these hateful robes. Oh, if they were only my  
shroud it would not matter!"

"It is wicked to say such things, Ethelind."

"Is it? I do not know. In the grave there is  
peace and rest. Oh, if I were only there!"

She started to her feet, and began to march  
restlessly up and down the room, her hands  
clapped tightly on her bosom. Like the ghost  
of a bride she looked with her ghastly face—in  
which the only spots of color were the violet-  
blue of her eyes—and her trailing satin robe over  
which fell, uncared for, the fleecy folds of the  
bridal-vail.

At length she paused before a Japanese cabi-  
net that stood in one corner of the room. She  
remained there motionless so long that Dolores,  
softly following her, saw that her eyes were fixed  
upon a small dagger of foren gun workmanship  
that reposed on one of the shelves.

"Better death than a life of misery!" mutter-  
ed the half-crazed creature. "God is merciful  
—he knows my temptation and despair—he will  
forgive me."

With a frenzied laugh she seized the dagger,  
and in another moment would have buried it  
in her bosom had not Dolores arrested the up-  
lifted arm.

"My God, Ethelind, what would you do?"

"Let me alone! Why did you seek to hinder  
me?"

"My poor friend, do you not know that self-  
destruction is the one sin that Heaven itself can  
not pardon?"

A distressing wail broke from Ethelind's lips,  
her limbs trembled, and she sunk down on the  
floor as if strength had suddenly deserted her.

"I told you I was mad."

"I believe, on my soul, you are. Come, let  
me remove your wretch and vail and you shall  
lie down on my bed until you are more com-  
posed."

Ethelind fiercely pushed away the hands  
that would have performed these friendly of-  
fices.

"Let my vail remain. It is altogether fitting



that Raymond should have a mad-woman for his bride.

"There shall be no marriage! If no other voice is lifted against such a wicked proceeding mine shall be. Oh, Ethelind, why did you cloak your real feelings until this late hour?"

"It was a part of my madness," she added, while a shudder passed through her. "I have acted like an insane person all these weeks. It was pique that caused me to accept Raymond Challoner. I plighted my troth to him while my whole heart belonged to another."

There was a silence. Dolores felt herself turn pale, but she leaned over the stricken creature, gently clasping her arms about her.

"Let me go to Colonel Falkner, your guardian, and tell him all this."

A sudden scarlet flamed over that pallid face, creeping up to the roots of her glowing auburn hair. She quickly arrested it, and said at length in a scarcely audible voice:

"Do you think Colonel Falkner would help me?"

"I do."

"What is he?"

"Downstairs, among the guests, I suppose."

"Very well. You may find him, and bring him here."

Dolores poured a glass of water, and when Ethelind had swallowed it she led her to an easy-chair beside the open window. The curtains were looped back and the moonlight streamed into the room. The faint perfume of violets and mignonette was on the air.

"Take courage. All may yet be well."

Having uttered these comforting words, she went out hastily. Her own troubles had no place in her consciousness at that moment. She descended the grand staircase without giving a second thought to the curious eyes that were upon her, though a very audible whisper reached her ears as she gained the lower hall.

"That is Miss Gloyne. She is to be bride-maid. Isn't her dress becoming?"

One of the servants stood near the drawing-room door, and to him she spoke in suppressed tones:

"I must see Colonel Falkner. Please find him, and ask him to come here."

The servant bowed, and hurried away. Three minutes later, a tall, powerfully-built man of two-and-thirty had taken her hand and was bending over it. He was distinguished-looking rather than handsome. His eyes were large, and of a deep gray, his hair black. It was a face that never failed to attract.

"John says you were asking for me, Dolores," he said.

"Yes, Colonel Falkner—Ethelind is in my room. She is in trouble. You had better go to her."

He looked at her with a glance of surprise.

"There has been no blundering in the arrangements, I trust?"

"It isn't that. Will you go?"

"It lacks but ten minutes of the hour appointed for the ceremony," he said, referring to his watch. "Yes, come quickly; we have no time to lose."

They passed together up the stairs, under the arches of living green with which they were decorated. At the door of her own room Dolores paused, and signed for Colonel Falkner to enter alone.

"I will wait here," she said.

He went in and closed the door. A sudden thrill went to his heart as his gaze rested upon that drooping, listless figure at the window. He trembled as he drew nearer.

"Ethelind, I am here. What can I do for you?"

At the sound of his voice she half-rose, with clenched hands, but instantly fell back again.

"If you do not save me," she said, in a sharp, unsteady whisper, "I am lost."

"Save you! From what?"

"A broken heart—a blighted life."

Colonel Falkner looked at her curiously. She was shivering, and her face shone deadly pale in the lamplight, but her blue eyes burned and glittered feverishly bright.

"Has Raymond done anything to offend you?" he asked, after a brief pause.

"Raymond! Don't speak his name!" she cried, vehemently. "I hate him. I dread his presence—I shrink from his touch—oh, would that I could hide away from him forever!"

"Poor child! How long has this been so?"

"How long? It has never been otherwise. He was always distasteful to me—always."

"Why, then, did you betroth yourself to him?"

His tone of gentle reproach seemed to sting her beyond all her powers of self-control. Leaning toward him, she said quite fervently:

"And you ask that—you who might have saved me, by a kind word or a loving look, from this living death! Great God!"

"Ethelind!"

"Let me speak. It is better so. The shame of the confession may kill me. But for your indifference I might never have given myself to another. I hoped to forget you—in time. Oh, vain delusion! And I hoped that you, too, would feel a little prick of pain when we were married. Good heavens! That was a madder thought than the other! You do not care how deeply I suffer."

Colonel Falkner himself turned very pale as he listened to her ravings. In vain he tried to check them. The confession was as humiliating to him as it could be to herself; and he realized the overpowering shame that must be hers when she came to her better senses.

"Try to calm yourself," he said, earnestly. "Just now you are excited and delirious, and know not what you are saying."

"Bear with me a little longer," she went on, in low-toned entreaty. "I scarcely know when this passion took root in my heart—it seems as though it had always been there. At first it was only a child's worship of an ideal hero. But, during the six months that have elapsed since you returned from that long, long sojourn in Europe, it has developed into the love of a passionate woman."

Colonel Falkner gave a shrinking gesture, as if the words only had distressed him.

After a silence he gained resolution to say:

"You are my ward, Ethelind—many years my junior. I invariably think of you as a child."

"Suffering develops one early."

"This is a profitless subject, my poor child. Let us dismiss it now and forever."

She rose suddenly, stood before him, and lifted her cold, white face.

"Have sometimes suspected that a prior passion had closed your heart against me," she said, in a whisper. "Tell me, is it so?"

"Men seldom reach my age unscathed."

Speaking thus, he drew from his breast-pocket a small locket studded with jewels, opened it and held it toward her.

Ethelind bent to look. The dark, passionate, bewitching face that smiled on her from the painted ivory seemed just such another as that for which Marc Antony flung a world away.

"You loved the original of that picture?" she said, very low.

"Yes."

"Perhaps you love her still."

"I do."

She gasped a little.

"Did you meet her abroad?"

"Yes."

Another pause. For her life she could not go on with the interrogatory. She stood like a marble woman, the pitiless lamplight shining on her livid face.

"I hope you were happy in your love," at last she contrived to say, with a smile that was only pitiful.

"No, for it wrecked and cursed my life."

She tried to look at him, but her eyelids drooped with a slight quivering that betrayed how deeply her nature was wrought upon. Suddenly her fragile figure began to sway violently, and she put out both hands like a person groping in the dark.

"I am faint—I am ill!" she gasped.

He sprung forward and caught her in his arms just as, with a long moan, she would have fallen senseless on the floor.

## CHAPTER III.

## A TORTURED HEART.

"I cannot love him, yet I suppose him virtuous, know him noble, Of great estate, of fresh and stainless youth, A gracious person, yet I cannot love him."

—SHAKESPEARE.

COLONEL FALKNER had been an officer in the late war, winning his title in wild scenes of carnage and bloodshed; but it had never before fallen to his lot to see a woman in a deadly swoon, and he found himself helpless as a child. A pang of self-reproach thrilled him as he gazed upon her deathly-white face resting so unconsciously upon his breast.

"May Heaven forgive me if I have been in fault for this," he muttered.

Raising his voice he called sharply to Dolores, who had remained on guard outside the door. She entered, looking nervous and hurried.

"Mercy on me!" she ejaculated, taking in the situation at a glance. "The hour has struck—they are looking for Ethelind—and now she has fainted on our hands!"

With ready presence of mind she removed the bridal-wreath and veil, viciously tossing them into the darkest corner of the room; then wheeled a low couch up to the open window.

"Let her lie here, where the cool air will blow over her. That will do. Now look the door, or we shall be invaded by every bridemaid in the house."

The caution did not come a moment too soon. Colonel Falkner had scarcely turned the key when an impatient knock sounded on the door, and a treble voice outside demanded news of the bride, who was missing from her chamber.

"Ethelind is here, with me," Dolores called out. "Go away. We will join you presently."

"The hour has struck, and Mr. Challoner is waiting at the foot of the stairs."

"Tell him to be patient."

She looked dismayed, however, as she bent over the senseless bride with smelling-salts and *eau de cologne*.

"This is no ordinary fainting-fit," she whispered. "I feel half-afraid."

"What is to be done?"

"Let us wait and see."

Dolores recalled every remedy she had ever known to be employed in such cases, but all in vain. Not a single symptom of returning animation came back to those rigid limbs and marble-like features.

"A physician must be summoned," Colonel Falkner said at length, in a nervous tone. "She might die."

"Yes, we are doing her no good. You can slip out quietly. I will undertake to keep the room clear until Dr. Lance arrives."

At this moment an imperative knock sounded on the door.

"Open," said a haughty voice. "I must and will know the reason of this delay."

"It is my mother," whispered Colonel Falkner. "She must be admitted, of course."

He opened the fastenings, and Mrs. Falkner entered, looking very stately and grand in her black velvet dress, with the Falkner diamonds sparkling on her arms and at her throat. A remarkably handsome woman in spite of her sixty-eight years was the mistress of Glenoaks, and many a youthful belle might have coveted the purity of her complexion, the cold brilliancy of her steel-gray eyes, and the graceful poise of her well-shaped head.

"Philip—you here!" she exclaimed, as her startled gaze rested on the figure of her son.

He pointed silently to the motionless figure on the couch. Mrs. Falkner sprang forward, effectually startled out of her self-control.

"Ethelind! Good heavens! What has happened to the poor child?"

"It is a fainting-fit."

"Of course. But, what could have caused it? Dear me. Was ever anything so unfortunate! I'm afraid the wedding will have to be put off, and all our friends sent home again."

Colonel Falkner went out hastily to dispatch one of the servants for the family physician. Long before Dr. Lance arrived, however, in spite of every precaution taken, it began to be whispered about in the lower rooms that the bride-elect had suddenly fallen ill, and there was likely to be no wedding.

One of the first persons to besiege the room in which Ethelind lay was Raymond Challoner himself. He looked pale, anxious and nervous.

"She will be better soon—will she not?" he said, in a half-impulsive whisper, stealing to the side of Dolores.

"I hope so."

"Well enough for the ceremony to go on?"

"Certainly not," Dolores answered, sharply. "You must give her up for the present—thank God!"

He looked at her fiercely.

"Why do you conclude your sentence with a thanksgiving?"

"Because Ethelind will have a respite she greatly requires. Do you not realize what has brought her to this pass? She does not love you, and the thought of the marriage is killing her."

"She will think better of it when all is over."

"You had better give her up."

"I am not so magnanimous," said Raymond, with a slight sneer. "She is necessary to my happiness, and I shall hold her to her plighted word. What else could you expect?"

"Nothing," from you," Dolores answered, bitterly. "A nobler man would have decided differently."

"I do not profess to be a saint. But I am not weak enough to be turned aside from my purpose by this unfortunate woman."

"It is strange that you should desire an unwilling bride."

"But you are not madly in love with one who simply regards you with toleration," he answered, with a cold smile.

An hour later there came a faint, tremulous motion about Ethelind's closed lids, and her eyes opened, sending one quick, startled glance all round.

"Philip, where are you?" she cried, wildly.

Colonel Falkner drew near and took her hand.

"Rouse yourself, Ethelind," he said, trying with ready tact to shield her. "You have been very ill."

"I remember now," she faintly panted. "I was dressed for the wedding—the guests were in the house."

A frightened look came on her face, and the words died away in an unintelligible murmur. Just at that instant she caught a glimpse of Raymond Challoner himself standing near in his elegant evening costume, looking at her searchingly. She shuddered violently, and closed her eyes.

"I am glad you are better, darling," he whispered, bending over her.

"Go away," she panted. "Go, and leave me with Dolores. I am too ill to talk."

Dr. Lance now interposed in her behalf, and in a few minutes the room was cleared of all whose presence there was superfluous.

All that night and most of the next day Ethelind lay on the couch, white, silent, and helpless. Her only interest in life seemed a desire to be let alone. Her hands remained, for the most part, folded on her bosom, and her eyes looked straight forward in a fixed, dreamy stare.

Late in the afternoon, Mrs. Falkner came upstairs for the first time since the previous night.

"Do try to rouse yourself, child," she said, drawing near the couch. "Poor Raymond suffers dreadfully. He does nothing but pace the floor, and send messengers to inquire how you are getting on."

"Why does he not go away?" Ethelind asked in a constrained voice.

"And leave you like this?"

"I could recover just as well without him."

Mrs. Falkner gave way to a feeling of half-angry impatience.

"I don't know the reason of your singular words and actions, Ethelind, and I have no desire to inquire into it. But really you ought to give Raymond credit for possessing a little over-like sympathy."

No answer.

"He sent me to inquire how soon the wedding can take place."

Ethelind hid her face in the pillow and shuddered.

"Put it off as long as possible—that is all I ask," she said, and then she broke out crying, hysterically.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE LADY OF LORN.

"I'll dwell alone, alone, And none shall touch me—none shall look On me!"

—BARRY CORNWALL.

A LITTLE less than two miles distant from Glenoaks, on a steep declivity overlooking the blue waters of the bay that finally lost itself in the blue brine of the Atlantic, stood a dark, weird, gloomy old house known far and near by the singular, but in this case appropriate, name of Lorn.

A large mansion it was in truth, standing solitary and alone on its eminence, and ever presenting the same dark, gray, forbidding aspect to the world, as if defying the ravaging hand of time itself. It was

"A house—but under some prodigious ban

Shame, misfortune, or death had speedily overtaken its different owners, one after another, until the simple country folk were led to avoid the desolate mansion as a place accursed, and it was left to molder tenantless and forsaken, as its prophetic name implied.

Suddenly the whole countryside was electrified by the rumor that a wealthy young widow, Mrs. Faunce, had purchased Lorn, and was coming to take possession immediately—possibly to bury some deep sorrow in the seclusion it offered.

A few days later, vans of handsome furniture began to arrive, pictures in boxes, musical instruments, and various articles of vertu and interest which went to show that the new owner of Lorn must be a lady of culture and aesthetic taste.

At length Mrs. Faunce arrived with her little retinue of servants. The young widow betrayed no inclination to cultivate the acquaintance of her neighbors, however. She denied herself to everybody who called, and all that the outer world saw of her was the occasional vision of a slender wail figure standing on the balconies or restlessly pacing the weed-choked paths that interlaced each other throughout the grounds.

At one o'clock one afternoon—it was two days subsequent to the interrupted wedding at Glenoaks—two of the women-servants were engaged in dusting and cleansing one of the long passages branching off from the main hall, when Mrs. Faunce drew near. She had on the disguising mantle she always wore when not in her own private apartments, and the obnoxious veil covered and concealed her face.

Only one servant out of all that household had ever seen her dressed differently, and that one was Joan Withers, the gaunt little old woman with the yellow face and crooked shoulders, who started up from her knees, and stood in respectful silence while her mistress drew near.

The other, Phoebe Jelly, had been picked up in New York just before the removal to Lorn; and to her Mrs. Faunce had been from the first, an embodied mystery. The girl would have given her right hand, almost, for the privilege of seeing that shrouded figure divested of all disguise.

Joan, Mrs. Faunce said, in a low, melodious voice, as she languidly approached, "the picture of the 'Crucifixion' is to be hung in the vacant space between those windows, and the marble copy of the Virgin and child placed on a stand underneath it. You may instruct Martin accordingly as to the proper arrangement."

"Yes, madam."

"The 'Last Supper' will show to the best advantage against the blank wall opposite."

"It shall find a place there, madam."

"You understand all my whims and fancies, Joan, and know the reason why?" Phoebe murmured, sullenly.

"The other arrangements I shall give over entirely into your hands."

"You can trust me, dear lady."

Mrs. Faunce passed on. The instant she had disappeared Phoebe turned to her companion and said in a hurried whisper:

"Joan, why does our mistress invariably appear among us in that disguise?"

"She has her reasons for it, I suppose," was the cold reply.

"It is very strange. I have been here a week to-day, and have never seen her face."

"Humph. Had you been here all the weeks in a month, and months in a year, you might still be compelled to make the same acknowledgment."

"You might as well say I'm a fool, and done with it," Phoebe angrily exclaimed.

"You can trust me, dear lady."

"I'll see what she looks like before I'm many days older than she is. By the way, when Phoebe muttered, sullenly,

"Humph! Take my advice, and never meddle with what doesn't concern you. It is the safest way."

"You know why Mrs. Faunce so persistently hides her face?"

"I may—or may not."

"Perhaps she has been frightfully disfigured by small-pox."

"Joan made no reply."

"And portions of her face eaten away by a cancer."

No answer.

"Or is rendered hideous by some livid birthmark."

Joan, still.

"Why don't you speak, Joan?" Phoebe irritably demanded. "Does Mrs. Faunce go about veiled because her countenance is so frightful to look upon?"

"You must draw your own conclusions; I have nothing to give."

Phoebe started up, as if tempted to throw her dusting-brush at the woman's head.

"You are a provoking old witch, Joan! Whatever the mystery, I am sure her husband's death had nothing to do with it, or with the seclusion in which she lives. By the way, when and where did Mr. Faunce die?"

"I do not keep a family record."

"What! you won't even tell me that?"

"I prefer not to speak of any matter that my mistress shows a disposition to keep to herself."

"Oh, I'd like to shake you!" gasped Phoebe. "Well, keep your secrets. One of these days I shall learn all about them without any help from you."

"Perhaps."

After a short silence, Phoebe added in a meditative tone:

"It is very possible that Mrs. Faunce has taken a vow to wear a veil for a certain period, as a penance for some real or fancied sin."

Joan smiled again.

"Do you know why she settled down in this lonely place?"

"Yes."

"And approve so singular a whim?"

"No, I cannot truthfully say that I do approve it. But Mrs. Faunce is very self-willed, and it is useless to oppose any caprice she sets her heart upon carrying out."

Having uttered these words, Joan shut her lips firmly together, and picking up brush and broom, hurried down the passage as if anxious to put an end to the catechism.

Phoebe kept on at her work for some time longer; but curiosity had been excited to fever-pitch, and she suddenly resolved to gratify it at whatever hazard.

"Here's a mystery right under my nose," she thought; "and that horrid old woman laughs at me and shrugs her shoulders as much as to say 'Hands off!' I'll find out what it means if I die for it."

Glancing half fearfully all round, and listening intently for a moment or two, Phoebe stood on tiptoe down the passage, and after doubling several corners, reached at length a door that stood slightly ajar.

In this room—a sort of boudoir—Mrs. Faunce usually sat. She was within at that very mo-

ment—the sound of her voice, reading aloud, fell upon Phoebe's ear as she paused, trembling and palpitating, with her hand on the knob. There was a mournful cadence in those low, bell-like tones, that strangely impressed the listener.

At length the girl gathered courage to cross the threshold. The room was large and lofty, and furnished with exquisite taste. Mrs. Faunce sat at the upper end, an Indian screen of elaborate design concealing her from the view of any one standing in the passage.

Stealing forward with a soft, gliding movement, Phoebe pushed her head inch by inch beyond the margin of the screen. Mrs. Faunce sat with her back toward her. The obnoxious veil lay on a chair within reach. Her head, now fully exposed to view, was purely classic in its outlines; immense coils of purplish black hair, pure and shining as bands of richest satin, surrounded it. Her countenance was hidden; only one ear, exquisitely tinted as a sea-shell, and the delicate formation of the shapely chin, were visible.

The musical tones died abruptly away. Mrs. Faunce must have caught a glimpse of the intruder in the full-length mirror that hung opposite, for, uttering an angry exclamation, she suddenly caught up the veil, threw it over her head and face, and confronted the now thoroughly-frightened girl.

"What is your business here?" she haughtily demanded.

"I—I—thought you rung," stammered Phoebe, covering under the intense glare of eyes that seemed fairly to scorch her face, even through the thick folds of the veil they had penetrated.

"Joan always answers my bell. I believed the arrangement was generally understood."

"Forgive me, madam. I meant no harm."

Mrs. Faunce made a gesture of impatience.

"Enough. Your motive in thus intruding is clearly palpable to me."

"Oh, madam, I'm sorry enough now for what I have done," ejaculated Phoebe, clasping her hands. "Only say that you will forgive me."

"I may say that," Mrs. Faunce said, with a cold smile. "But I warn you not to repeat it. No one, not even Joan, presumes to enter this room without first knocking for permission."

She haughtily waved her hand as a sign of dismissal, and when Phoebe had shrunk out at the door looking very crestfallen, this strange woman turned, and began walking up and down with hurried, uneven steps.

"I might have thought that the mystery in which I choose to enshroud myself would awaken curiosity in vulgar minds," she muttered. "Shall I gain anything whatever by this new caprice? Oh, pitying Heaven," she cried, wildly throwing up her clasped hands, "help me or I perish! Oh, would that I had slept in my grave long ago! It would have been better for me—far better for others!"

Before the paroxysm had passed, Joan's muffled knock was heard at the door. Mrs. Faunce's face still remained hidden, but the faithful servant knew by her quick and labored breathing that something unusual had occurred.

"Oh, madam, what is it?" she exclaimed, coming forward quickly. "Are you ill?"

"Only the old complaint—heart-ache."

"You are trembling."



They all have business outside; going away in the mornin' an' not comin' back till night. No, I told Mr. Richard I'd take you, the short time you was goin' to stay in the city, but I wouldn't make a practice out of it for no money. Not that I'd mind it so much, but the majority on 'em ain't, quiet as you be. But the majority on 'em ain't, not by no manner of means. I had enough of that sort of thing when my poor dead-and-gone husband was 'live. When a body has got to my age, and worked hard all their life, they want a little rest an' quiet."

Hannah paused a moment, but only to take breath.

"Your breakfast will be ready in five minutes. I didn't make the coffee, because I wanted it to be fresh. Here's the morning's paper, with all about that dreadful accident in it. Curious enough, they've got your name in the list of the killed. I told Mr. Richard that the list had it corrected, but he said as how 'twan't no manner of use; them posky newspaper men was so pig-headed an' con'trary that they never would own they was mistaken 'bout anything. Very unaccommodating of 'em, to say the least."

Irva shivered as her eye fell upon the name of the ill-fated lady, in whose place she had so mysteriously stepped. What a terrible fate for one so young! Yet it was a question if she were not the most fortunate of the two.

Her grave look was not unnoticed by Hannah.

"You've had a very fortunate escape, Miss Lane."

"I have, indeed!" echoed Irva, who had more cause for gratitude than Hannah supposed.

While she was thus speaking, Hannah was summoned up-stairs by the ringing of the door-bell, returning in a few minutes.

As soon as Irva rose from the table, she said:

"Mr. Richard is up-stairs, in the parlor, waiting to see you."

Hannah noticed the agitation that Irva vainly strove to subdue, with some surprise, though ascribing it to the shock her nervous system had received.

"He ain't in no hurry. I told him that you was at breakfast; an' he insisted that I shouldn't tell you till you had finished."

Had Irva been a royal princess, Richard could not have bowed over the hand she extended to him with an air of more respect. He saw the doubts and misgivings so plainly visible in her constrained manner and varying color, and hastened to reassure her.

Leading her to the sofa, he wheeled an easy-chair in front of her, and sat down; a proceeding that served to still her fluttering nerves and put her more at ease than anything he could have said.

Irva remembered what he said to her on the night of their first meeting. "You can trust me. I am an honorable man," and as she looked into those honest blue eyes, she felt that he spoke truly.

In order to invite her confidence, Richard told her all about himself. How he was an orphan, whose nearest relatives were two sisters, one a half-sister, several years older than himself.

He told her about Hannah, who had lived with his mother until her marriage; relating various anecdotes illustrative of her kindness of heart and good common sense; displaying such a fund of kindly and generous feeling himself, that before she was aware of it, Irva was talking to him as freely as if she had known him all her life.

Richard suddenly checked the tide of his reminiscences.

"Now, let me hear a little about you. To commence at the beginning, how are you feeling?"

Irva's cheeks flushed.

"Very much as if I were a ship, sailing under false colors."

"Ah! well; we'll fix that all right."

Then catching the questioning look in the shy eyes that were lifted to his, he added, with a laugh:

"Miss Irva—you told me that was your name. I think—you look at me as if I was an ogre. Now, in spite of my six feet of stature, and ferocious appearance, I guarantee to assure you that I am a most harmless fellow."

"I don't think you the least bit of an ogre," smiled Irva. "On the contrary, I find it impossible to express my appreciation of your generous and noble conduct."

Richard's face lighted up at this praise, which sounded very sweet to him.

"Show it by trusting me a little."

Richard looked at the face, whose varying color showed the conflict that was going on.

"Don't think that I want to pry into anything that you wish to conceal. Only if there is anything that you would like to tell me, I pledge myself to regard it as a most sacred confidence; giving you all the counsel and assistance in my power."

It was some moments before Irva spoke, and when she did, it was slowly and with hesitation.

"I have little to tell, and that little is not pleasant to speak of, or remember. I am a worse than orphan; my mother died when I was a baby—my father I never saw. I was called by the name of the woman who brought me up, but to which I have no claim. I dare not bear that name any longer, because I have an enemy, a bad and cruel man, from whom I wish to escape. Pray do not think me ungrateful, but I cannot, dare not tell you more!"

"You need not; I will not ask you another question. I said what I did, hoping that I might be able to serve you."

"The only way by which you can do that is to obtain me some kind of employment."

Richard glanced from the small hands to the face, which, with all its delicacy of outline, had a certain air of steadiness and resolution.

"Have you ever taught any?"

"No; but I think I could, if the pupils were not too far advanced."

Richard was silent, and Irva continued:

"If you knew of any place, I should be so glad. I would be content with very small salary."

"A stranger would find it next to an impossibility, without credentials."

Irva's countenance fell.

"The place with my sister, that Miss Lane, poor thing, was to fill, is now vacant, and would just suit you."

"Would she take me without references?"

Richard knew what a careful mother his sister was.

"Could she have an opportunity of knowing you, she would trust you I am sure. Supposing you go and make a trial of it. My sister has never seen Miss Lane, and I know nothing of her death."

"Without letting her know who I am—I would that be right?"

"I don't think it would be wrong—under the circumstances. I don't mean, of course, to continue the supposition, but only for a few weeks, until you have had time to win her confidence, as you will be sure to do. You can then tell her how it is. Or, if you would rather not do so, I will look around, in the meantime, and find you some other opening. There is no possible chance for detection, as the lady whose name and place you take had no relatives except a younger brother, who was adopted by a man out West. As for wronging my sister in any way, I secure for her children a good governess, and that is all she requires. You will not find your duties hard or irksome. My sister is a thorough lady, in every sense of the word, and will do everything to make her home pleasant to you. There are only three children, the oldest not ten yet, very quiet and well-behaved."

"I have no doubt of its being a desirable place, and no fears that my duties will be too hard."

"Then leave the rest to me," interrupted Richard, gayly. "My shoulders are broad enough to take all the responsibility. If anybody is blamed, I will take special pains to see that it falls on the right party."

"Now, my dear Miss Lane—that is your name now, you know—I want you to consider me the big brother who had forgotten you had, and who would only be too happy to be of service to you."

The tears sprang to Irva's eyes.

"I wish you were!"

The honest fellow's face flushed at the strong protest his heart uttered against this wish.

"As children say, 'let us make believe' that it is so. And in that relation, permit me to remark, as it was the intention of Miss Lane, that was, to do some shopping in the city, perhaps Miss Lane, that is, would like to do some, also. In that case, I hope she will allow me to be her banker; with the proviso, however, that she repay me when her first quarter is due."

Irva felt the thoughtfulness and delicacy of these words.

"I think I have a way of obtaining all I shall need. To show my appreciation of our kindness, I promise, in case I am mistaken, I will let you know."

"Now remember. In the meantime, I will write to my sister; mentioning the accident, and the delay it has occasioned, and making everything clear and straight for you."

The resource to which Irva alluded was the chain, from which was suspended the locket containing her mother's picture.

On returning to her room she examined it. It was heavy and of solid gold, and must have cost considerable in the day of it.

The jeweler to whom she applied offered her twenty-five dollars, less than half its worth; but it was more than Irva expected, and it was very gladly accepted.

On her return she found a trunk in her room, on which were the initials of her new name.

In the bonnet-box was a brown straw hat, trimmed with velvet of the same color, and a long, drooping feather; much handsomer than she would have thought of buying.

In another part of it were gloves, handkerchief and various other articles of feminine apparel.

Irva knew, in a moment, who they were from, but when Richard came in the evening, and she taxed him with it, half-reproachfully, he made strange of the whole affair, declaring it to be a mystery too deep for him to fathom.

## CHAPTER XVI.

WHAT HANNAH THOUGHT ABOUT IT.

It was finally settled that Irva should wait a week longer than the time at first decided upon, so that Richard could accompany her.

"I want to see sister Kate and the babies," he said. "And then it will be better, taking everything into consideration, that I should go with you."

Richard often took tea at Hannah's during this interval, and was invariably there every evening.

He always had some ostensible errand.

"I only ran in for a minute," he would say, laughingly.

But Hannah noticed that his minutes were remarkably long ones, stretching themselves into an hour, at the shortest.

She was very shrewd and sharp-sighted, and began to feel a little uneasy at two young people, each so formed as to please and attract the other, yet so different in position, being thrown so much together.

She always used a great deal of freedom in speaking to Richard, treating him very much as she did when he was boy, and which, as it amused him, he had encouraged.

One night she followed him out onto the steps.

"You were always fond of me, Mr. Richard," she said, dryly; "but there never was a time before that you couldn't exist without seeing me twice in twenty-four hours!"

Richard colored.

"What foolish notion have you got into your head, now?" he laughed.

"Mind that you don't get foolish notions into somebody else's head."

"What do you mean?"

Hannah looked up into the big blue eyes, which had the same honest look that they had when he was a boy.

"I know that you wouldn't do nothin' wrong, Mr. Richard, not if you knowed it; but young men is so thoughtless. Miss Lane is a nice little body; I never look so to any one before on such acquaintance. An' she's pretty, there ain't no denyin' that. An' I'm glad to see you kind to her. You orter be kind to all such; helpin' them all you can, in their own life an' way. But you an' she can't never be more to each other than you be now. An' I ain't no real kindness for a man in your position to pay a girl in hers too much attention."

Richard listened to this with a visible impatience, that almost amounted to anger.

"What nonsense! Hannah. To hear you and my sister talk, one would suppose I belonged to the blood-royal, instead of being an American-born citizen, penniless, but for the bounty of my uncle, who may leave his property to some one else, as he has a perfect right to do. Miss Lane is my equal, in every respect, and the man will be fortunate that wins her."

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"I know that you wouldn't do nothin' wrong, Mr. Richard, not if you knowed it; but young men is so thoughtless. Miss Lane is a nice little body; I never look so to any one before on such acquaintance. An' she's pretty, there ain't no denyin' that. An' I'm glad to see you kind to her. You orter be kind to all such; helpin' them all you can, in their own life an' way. But you an' she can't never be more to each other than you be now. An' I ain't no real kindness for a man in your position to pay a girl in hers too much attention."

Richard listened to this with a visible impatience, that almost amounted to anger.

"What nonsense! Hannah. To hear you and my sister talk, one would suppose I belonged to the blood-royal, instead of being an American-born citizen, penniless, but for the bounty of my uncle, who may leave his property to some one else, as he has a perfect right to do. Miss Lane is my equal, in every respect, and the man will be fortunate that wins her."

"What foolish notion have you got into your head, now?" he laughed.

"Mind that you don't get foolish notions into somebody else's head."

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noticin', an' I couldn't see nothin' more'n comin'. He treats her as if she was a queen, an' she ain't the least mite forrerd, I'll say that fur her!"

Irva's simple preparations were soon made. She got herself a brown traveling-suit, just the shade of her hat, with gloves to match, in which she looked very nicely.

Richard glanced approvingly at her costume, as he entered the room where she sat waiting for him.

There was not a bit of color about her except in her cheeks, and these were as bright as the bunch of roses he handed her.

"I am really getting jealous of Miss Lane," laughed Richard; "you never put such a long face as that on whenever I went away!"

"Be sure you come an' see me whenever you come to the city!" called out Hannah, as they went down the steps.

"Of course she'll come," said Richard, looking back; "I shall bring her myself."

"What a nice-lookin' couple they be!" thought Hannah, as she looked after them. "It almost seems as if they was made for each other. But, lawful sakes, his uncle would never consent in the world, an' as for Miss Lane an' Miss Kate, they'd go distracted at the very thought of it."

In less than half an hour Richard and Irva were steaming up the Hudson.

It was a beautiful day, and they remained most of the time on deck. It was the first trip Irva had had up the river, and everything was new and delightful.

With Richard, it had lost the charm of novelty, but he took great pleasure in pointing out to Irva the beautiful residences and places of note by which they passed. Indeed, he felt that it was, by far, the pleasantest trip he had ever taken, ending all his sorrows.

"We are nearly home now," he said, with a half-sigh; "it seems as if we had come in half the usual time."

Yonder is Forest Hill," he added, pointing to a house perched upon a rocky eminence far above their heads. "We have to pass it to get to the landing."

It was likely to be her home for some months, at least, and Irva surveyed it with no little interest.

It looked very solitary, with no habitation anywhere near it.

Perhaps this thought was visible in Irva's countenance, for Richard said:

"You cannot tell much about it from the river. On the other side the ascent is so gradual as hardly to be noticed, and the country round about very beautiful. My sister spends most of her time there, on account of the children. But coming from the city, I fear, at first, it will seem rather lonely to you."

Do not like the city, and am very, very glad to leave it."

As Richard looked at the speaker he remembered what she had told him.

Who could be an enemy of one so gentle and good?

They had now touched the dock.

Behind a low, open carriage stood a colored boy, his glistening teeth very apparent in the smile that broadened his face.

"There is Jack waiting for us," said Richard. "This way, Miss Lane."

"How do you do, Jack? All well at the house?"

"All very well, I thanks you, Mr. Richard," responded Jack, with a low bow.

Richard assisted Irva in, taking the reins into his own hands.

"I'll drive, Jack; you can ride back on the express."

"All right. I've got to stop for the mail, anyhow. They told me to come for the young lady, but they didn't nobody say as how you was comin', Mr. Richard."

There were didn't any one know it. I thought I'd take them by surprise."

Richard had spoken truly; the scenery which lay on each side of the winding road that led to Forest Hill was very beautiful, and a calm, restful feeling came over Irva as she looked around.

"You like it?" said Richard, who had been quietly watching her.

"Yes. I have spent most of my time in the country; and it seems like getting home."

"I knew it," thought Richard, his mind beginning to be lost in a sea of conjectures as to how one, manifestly so unused to the world, should be thrust so entirely upon it.

A sudden turn of the road brought the house into view, on the broad piazza of which a lady sat reading.

Two children were chasing each other over the lawn.

As soon as they saw Richard they set up a loud shout.

"There's Uncle Dick, mamma!"

The lady threw down her book and was down to the carriage almost as soon as they.

Is this really you, Richard?"

"This is really me," responded Richard, returning the kiss that was given him. "I've not come alone, you see. Miss Lane, this is my sister, Mrs. Vernon."

She smiled, as she thought of the little likelihood there was of her forgetting their relative positions.

"I shall not forget, either," she thought, "how much I owe to him. How kindly and generously he spoke of me, my brave defender! Happy the woman that wins such a true and loyal heart. It certainly will not be a friendless, nameless girl like me."

There was a certain something in Irva's manner, gentle as it was, that deterred Hannah from giving her any intimation of her fears.

But their frequent talks, in the long afternoons when Irva brought her sewing down into the sitting-room, she contrived to drop various hints which she thought would serve to put her on her guard.

She was very fond of the Harrington family, with whom she had spent her younger days. It was easy to perceive that Richard had always been her favorite, and many were the anecdotes and incidents that she had related to Irva concerning him, all of them of a nature to increase her admiration of his character.





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"handsomest mother," is, I am inclined to believe, a greater incentive for these feminines to exhibit the charms of their respective offspring to an admiring public, than any hope that their particular infant, or infants, will be preferred above others. A woman may, possibly, doubt that her child is the handsomest child that ever was born, but she never doubts concerning her own good looks. And when the "handsomest mother" receives her prize, every other woman who presented herself as a candidate for it, will wonder how it was that she was not chosen.

But, it is not necessary to waste money upon baby shows, even though one has no scruples about countenancing their debasement of humanity to a level with dogs, cats, cattle, poultry and other lower orders of animals; one can see baby shows at all times, and in all places, free of charge.

Do you travel by rail or by steamship, by ferry-boat or horse-car, you are sure to see a baby show on your journey; and are a thrice-happy mortal if you see not a dozen. There will be several distributed around the car, or occupying the steamer berths next yours, who will smile, and frown, and suck their thumbs, and sell their ribs, and smear themselves and every one who comes near them with fruit, cakes, or candy, and crow, and wail, and chatter, and romp, until you will piously wish them all in the bottom of—Well, anywhere but near you! On the ferry-boat there is the obstreperous infant who insists on jumping, and climbing, and running, and banging, and screaming, and communicating family secrets or remarkable wishes to every individual whom he can martyrize into a listener; and upon the horse-cars are the nurses with babies, and the mothers with babies, and the fathers with babies, all of whom must have seats. (And did you ever notice how a woman will get into a car, and until she obtains the desired seat tenderly cling to a big child that can walk and stand quite unaided at any other time?) And the babies slide upon the car floor and trip up unfortunate women who are hurrying to get out before they are carried more than two blocks beyond where they want to go, or climb upon the cushions, jamming in a gentleman's hat or knocking off his eye-glasses, or sit crosswise on their parents' knees, wiping their muddy small feet upon the next passenger's silk dress, or cry, or try to swallow their mittens, or disgorge their dinner, or perpetrate some other equally amusing, interesting, impish, or disgusting trick for the benefit of their elder companions.

Do you call upon a friend, one cherub opens the door; another displays his heels through the balustrade; a third, whose lips and hands disseminate a suspicious odor of bread and butter, follows mamma into the parlor, and when told to kiss you seizes your new gown with those odorous (you smell it odious) hands, leaving thereon two greasy marks; and you are conveyed up-stairs, by the doting mother, to see the fourth, who is asleep, and must not be awakened, but is so superior to any other baby in existence that you cannot think of leaving the house without seeing it.

You go home wondering why people cannot bring up their children better, and find that your May has been eating cake in the parlors, leaving the crumbs all about on the satin furniture, and that Tom is paddling with his dress on in the bath-tub.

Talk of baby shows! Show me the happy mortal who has seen so few of them that he enjoys paying twenty-five cents to look upon several scores of the little—ahem! darlings, and I would consider it great bliss to introduce him for a week's stay, night and day, in a family blessed with several small children.

Unless he was a saint, what wicked words he would want to use before he escaped their torments. Such impatience, restlessness, rudeness, noisiness, shouting, quarreling, crying, mischief-doing, impishness, dirtiness! What would he do with the lady in long clothes when asked to hold it? Goodness only knows, for the fathers of such mysteries rarely ever acquire that art to any amount of facility! Probably he would gather it up by the skirts, and let it flop down just where it ought to be supported; and when it cried, instead of deftly rushing for warm water, and condensed milk, and an "Alexandria" bottle, he would throw it up to the ceiling, halloo at it, puff his cigar smoke in its face, or do anything barbarous that would cause it to cry louder; and when such treatment precipitated the poor infant into an attack of nausea, would that man ever wear again the coat he wore then, or venture to meddle in future with babies! As for the next sized baby, old enough to toddle about the floor, and swallow pins, and tumble into water-jars, and pull over small tables, and the covers and other articles off of large ones, would the man want to attend baby shows, think you, after an experience with it?

Let those who wish to go to baby shows; but economical people will be contented, we think, with the shows they can get nearer home. As for us, the only baby shows we indorse are ones where the babies are profoundly wrapped in slumber; notwithstanding the beauty of "Wide Awake," we immensely prefer "Fast Asleep."

N. B.—I shall not be "in" to any of my married friends for a month or so after this article appears; and I shall give strict orders that the editor of the JOURNAL shall not send my address to any "inquiring friends."

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We must all have scoldings some time or other, but we have to bear them, and I don't know but we are made better for bearing them cheerfully.

Have courage and be hopeful. If days are dark and "times hard," look forward to brighter and better ones; this will inspire you to push on; but, if you don't look forward, you not only clog your own way but stop the passage for others. A great many persons in reading of those who have amassed wealth by an honest and upright course, wish they had their fortunes, but how few think of their integrity!

Poverty doesn't shut so many doors to a person as is supposed. The expression—"poor, but honest" should be dropped. Just as though it was a singular thing for a poor person to be honest! I know of several worthy people, who would sooner cut their right hand off than do a dishonest action, and they are poor. I had as lief trust to their word as I would to that of a millionaire, and I know I had as willingly place my funds in their keeping as I would in that of the safest bank in America.

If you are in the wrong, be generous enough to acknowledge it, and don't, on any account, strive to work your way out of it by prevarication, for that is mean and wicked, and adds more to the fault. A straightforward course is the safest and surest. No one will think less of you for being willing to acknowledge you are in error; but, if a person discovers you have falsified your way out of it, you will receive naught but contempt.

Treat all with whom you have dealings alike; don't fawn upon the rich on account of their wealth, and don't speak sharply to the poor on account of their poverty.

Do not be too ambitious to make a great show in the world; time enough for that when you can afford it. Don't be too desirous to have your name carved in massive marble over some great institution. Engrave it first in the hearts of your neighbors by good deeds and many actions.

Don't grow discouraged and despondent. Impediments beset many paths but they must be put aside and you must work bravely on. If your first, second or even third efforts prove failures, have confidence enough in yourself to hope that the fourth will be a success.

Do not waste too many words, or too much time, in telling what you intend to do, but go and do it at once, or others will be before you and make use of your ideas before you have the chance, and that is one good reason why it is best to keep one's business to oneself.

Do not be afraid to advertise your business after you are started in trade. Let the people know what you have for sale and your customers will arrive. Pay no heed to those who tell you that advertising is humbug, for they are often humbogs or stupid, themselves.

Let your wife know the state of your pecuniary affairs, and, take my word for it, she will be the first one to economize when she sees there is a necessity for her doing so.

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Monroe. "Take him by shoulders and heels then—and leave."

His words were accompanied by the action. There was a heavy splash, a commotion of the water—and silence. Their freight had disappeared.

In an instant the boat had already drifted away from the dark spot where the helpless victim had sunk.

One impulse from the oars and it was lost in the darkness.

"Ashore! Quick as lightning!" spoke the captain, in low, excited tones.

In fifteen minutes more they had regained the stern of their ship, and the mate had ascended her side, rope in hand.

"What is that?" exclaimed the captain, with a scared utterance, as he slightly stumbled.

"What?" quickly rejoined the mate.

"I stepped on something soft."

"Oh! it's a roll of oakum, that was flung into the boat this morning. Mount up here, quick! We must get to bed."

They did not hear a muttered sound, that came from the bow of the boat, and that seemed to form itself into these words: "Blame your awkward feet! Is them your sea-legs?"

Phil Hardy, their dwarfish foe, had gone to the bottom of the East river, and all his secrets with him. This was all they could think of, and their guilty souls were full of superstitious fear as they hastily retired to the cabin of the ship, not sure but that the spirit of the murdered boy might have preceded them.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### TRAPPED.

The letter of which Phil had proved such an inefficient postman, and which had fallen into the wrong hands, ran as follows:

"DEAR HARVEY.—You will be surprised to learn that I am in your city, now, instead of in my old home at Liverpool. How I came here is a long and not very agreeable tale, which I shall have to tell you in person. I have been through the most serious perils, but am safe here now, in the home of some worthy people.

"But I know they are too poor to be burdened with me, and I wish you to devise some means of taking me to my aunt's. You know who I mean, Mrs. Hannah Carson. She lives somewhere above Harlem, I believe.

"Let me hear from you without delay, as I am a little fearful about staying in this part of New York. Please excuse the shortness of this note. It is only a business paper, you see, and my messenger is waiting anxiously for it.

"Don't fail to answer at once, and don't forget that I am still, your true ALICE HOMER.

It may be seen that this letter gave Andrew Cunningham, into whose hands it had fallen, an opportunity to prosecute his schemes which he was not slow to perceive. Alice had put a weapon, which might prove fatal to her, into the hands of her worst enemy.

But all unconscious of this she waited, on the afternoon of her return from the Park, somewhat impatiently for an answer.

Little dreamed any of them into what deadly perils Phil had fallen, and his grandmother was getting quite tired at his ridiculous delay.

"Phil is just at the age when boys get to be perfect nuisances," she said, in a vexed tone.

"That's just him. If I send him for a pound of sugar, half the time he will go to the West Indies for it. Or be long enough gone. I must really train that boy some."

She was quite oblivious of the fact that she had for years been training him into these careless habits.

"Oh! never mind, Mrs. Hardy," protested Alice. "It is not really so particular."

"If you had only told him you were in haste," continued the old lady.

"It does not matter at all. It is only the curiosity of an idle woman that ails me. If I do not get an answer until to-morrow it will not matter. I wish you would only put me to work at something."

"I would like to give you something to bring back the color to those white cheeks," said the compassionate old lady. "I do not like to see you looking so."

"Don't mind that, Mrs. Hardy. That is only my fright at the Park. I do not intend to continue looking white. Do let me pare those potatoes for you."

"What? With those delicate hands? No, indeed. You shall do nothing of the sort."

"You do not know what these delicate hands are capable of. I shall scrub off that table, at any rate."

There ensued an amusing battle for the possession of the scrubbing-brush, which Alice had seized with a great show of vigor. The old lady conquered, and held it aloft in laughing triumph.

"Catch me letting you do any such thing," she cried.

"Then I only see one thing that remains to do," replied Alice.

"And what is that?"

"For you to get a glass case, and seal me up in it, and stand me in this corner for a parlor ornament."

"And a beautiful ornament you would make, my sweet, pale child," said Mrs. Hardy, fondly stroking the face of her guest. "Why, you are as nervous yet!"

"I am afraid I am rather frightened yet. Poor little Susy; she must have thought I was wild—Now you shall let me do something. That is the only way I can cure my hands of this trembling."

They were interrupted by the appearance of a young man at the open door, who inquired for Miss Homer.

"That is my name," said Alice.

"I was directed up here from below," he replied. "I have a letter for you, miss."

"A letter for me?" she exclaimed, surprised.

"Why, who—But Phil may have delivered mine," she continued to Mrs. Hardy. "He may not have waited for an answer."

She took the letter from the spruce-looking youth who held it, and glanced at the handwriting.

"That will do, sir. Is there an answer?"

"I think there is, miss," he replied.

"Please wait a moment, then, and I will see."

She opened the envelope, and quickly read the letter, her eyes lighting up with satisfaction as she did so.

"He speaks of a carriage. Is it at hand?" she asked.

"Yes, miss. It is just round the corner, in the next street."

"Be kind enough to wait outside for a minute. I have something to say privately to this lady," continued Alice, gently closing the door.

"I fear I must leave you, my kind-hearted friend," she said.

"Leave me?" faltered Mrs. Hardy.

"Yes. It was necessary I should not intrude too long upon you. I wrote to a gentleman friend requesting him to take me to the residence of an aunt of mine, who lives just out of New York."

"You have an answer from him?"

"No. He is from home. This is from his sister. She seems to have felt it necessary to open the letter and has sent a carriage for me."

"Are you sure it is from his sister?"

"Oh, yes! There can be no doubt of that."

"It struck me it might be another trick of your enemies—But then, nobody would get the letter from Phil but the right person. I know that. I suppose it was because the gentleman was not at home that he did not bring the answer himself—I do wish you had not been so quick, Miss Homer. I do so hate to lose you."

replied Alice, gently. "You have been too kind for that. If I stay in New York you shall often see me."

"Why, you are not going?" cried Susy, breaking in upon them.

"Yes, my dear. A friend of mine has sent his carriage for me."

"But I can't bear to have you go," exclaimed the child, bursting into tears. "I love you so."

"Love at first sight is not always durable," replied Miss Homer, smilingly.

"I don't care! I shall never quit loving you!" cried the sobbing child. "And I don't see why you can't stay."

"There are reasons, my dear," replied Alice, taking the distressed child in her arms. "I cannot stay to be a burden to Mrs. Hardy; for one thing."

"You are not a burden!" exclaimed Mrs. Hardy, energetically.

"I must try not to become one. I shall never forget my two dear friends. And I shall be sure to see you often. But now I feel that it is necessary that I should go to my aunt's."

"Perhaps it is," responded Mrs. Hardy. "And yet, somehow, I hate to see you going."

And the kindly old lady rubbed her eyes fiercely.

And it may be one of your enemies, too," declared Susy. "You were so afraid of them, and you might be going right into their hands."

"Somebody may have robbed Phil of the letter," suggested Mrs. Hardy.

"Why, I thought you were so confident of him, but he is only a boy," faltered the old lady.

"I am satisfied that he has done his errand properly," replied Alice. "I have here a letter from Miss Russell, which I have no doubt was written by her."

"Let me look at it," pleaded Susy.

The lady handed it with a smile to the inquisitive child, and turned to bid the old lady good-bye.

"Don't forget me!" cried Susy, springing with a bound into her new friend's arms, and warmly kissing and fondling her. "And you must be sure to come and see us very soon."

"Certainly I will," replied Alice, deeply affected by the child's fondness for her. "Meanwhile keep this to remember me."

She slipped a golden locket, with a curiously twisted chain, round the child's neck, and kissed her again as she set her down.

"Now, good-bye, dear friends," said Alice, slipping quickly out of the door, as if fearing to be overcome by their evident emotion.

The letter lay on the floor where Susy had thoughtlessly let it fall.

"I am ready now," announced Alice briefly, to the youth who was impatiently waiting. "Is the carriage far?"

"Just around the next corner, miss," he replied, leading the way.

Had she been able to see his face she would certainly have detected something sinister in its expression, innocent of guile as she was.

There was a sneering grimace upon it which indicated a wicked satisfaction in his success. His hand was thrust deep into his pocket as if grasping some substantial reward for his services.

But all that was visible to her was the back of a closely-cropped head, surmounted by a cap set jauntily over one ear.

"This way, miss," he explained, as they reached the foot of the stairs. "Your street here runs a little narrow, and the carriage stopped in the next turn."

In a minute more they had reached the wider street in question.

A stylish coach, drawn by two gray horses, stood waiting there, the driver upon the box.

The latter person was not in livery, and was a roughly-dressed native of the Emerald Isle.

He seemed weary of the delay, and called quickly to the youth to open the carriage door, and help the lady in.

"Do you know the directions?" she asked him, somewhat timidly.

"Certainly, ma'am. It's to Mrs. Carson's that I was told to drive you. She lives out beyond Harlem. I know the place bravely."

"Very well," she replied, reassured by his confident tone.

She stepped into the carriage, the door was closed, the youth mounted beside the driver, and in a minute more they were driving at a brisk pace out the New York streets.

"That's a gay equipage for a livery," said a boy, who had been looking on curiously.

"That's no livery," replied his companion.

"It's just that," rejoined the first speaker. "I don't know the driver, but I bet I could hunt up that gay young chap-aside of him."

"Twiggid him afore, hey, Joe Dot?"

"Yes. And he aint none too good. Wonder where they're drivin' that pretty woman to."

"To the Park, like enough," said the other, turning away.

Meanwhile the carriage was moving rapidly out Broadway, and thence out Fifth avenue, along the eastern boundary of the Park, and into the more thinly-settled region beyond.

The drive was a long one, and they seemed to have traveled miles beyond the upper extremity of the Park, when at length they drew up at the gate of a pretentious mansion, that stood back from the thinly built up road, surrounded by a dense clump of trees.

The youth sprang to the ground and opened the gate, permitting the carriage to pass through.

It drove slowly up a graveled carriage-way which wound through thick evergreens to the front of the house, and drew up at the steps of a large portico.

"Mrs. Carson is not well, miss," said the youth. "Step up this way. You will find her in the parlor here at the side."

It was with the first feeling of misgiving that Alice had experienced during her ride that Alice followed the briskly-moving boy.

He entered the hall, and threw open the door of a side parlor. She stepped in and the portal was quickly closed behind her. Her eyes were lifted, expecting to see the vaguely-remembered form of her aunt. Instead her shrinking gaze fell on the coldly triumphant face of her mortal foe, Andrew Cunningham.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 405.)

Margoun, the Strange:

OR,

Gilbert Grayling's Young Wife.

BY WM. MASON TURNER, M. D.,

AUTHOR OF "COLLEGE RIVALS," "MASKED MINER," "\$50,000 REWARD," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE DAY BREAKING.

MARGOUN sat alone in the study at the old Lodge! The room was in shadow, for the light in the lamp was turned low.

The dreary night-winds of the sultry summer sighed sadly around the old house. They were in keeping with the melancholy thoughts that crowded upon one another in rapid succession through the Hindoo's mind. His reveries carried him back to other lands, far beyond the rolling seas.

It was past nine o'clock, and Thorle Manton had left for the Grange nearly an hour before. So the East Indian was left alone to his musings.

But, suddenly, the door was opened and Aleck entered. He had been to the post-office at Shoreville for the Lodge mail. He brought with him a single letter. It was in a large envelope, bearing what looked like an official seal.

Aleck laid it upon the table and withdrew.

Margoun drew the envelope toward him and raised the light. Then he glanced at the superscription. A thrill shot through him, and a violent shiver ran over his tall frame.

The envelope bore, in the upper left corner, a crown; under it was this: "OFFICE OF THE BRITISH CONSUL-GENERAL, NEW YORK."

The address was as follows:

"TO MR. MARGOUN NENA-VASHTI,

"Care of Thorle Manton, Esq.,

"Shoreville P.O., New York."

The East Indian tore open the envelope with greedy fingers. Two folded sheets dropped out. One was tied around with a blue ribbon; the other was loose. Taking up the latter, Margoun read this:

"OFFICE BRITISH CONSUL-GENERAL, NEW YORK CITY.

"June 18th, 18—"

"DEAR AND GRACIOUS PR.—I beg leave to inclose herein a document, received more than a month since, at the Consulate, for you. Only to-day have I learned where it could reach you, and I forward at once. Asking that you will honor me by acknowledging receipt, with consideration, etc., etc.

THE BRITISH CONSUL-GENERAL."

Margoun laid the sheet aside and picked up the other. With trembling fingers he untied the knotted ribbon. Spreading open the thick sheet, he glanced once at its contents. Then as a low, glad cry escaped him, he cried out:

"At last! at last! But—his brow clouded, and his eyes dimmed as he continued: "How can I do it! How can I leave him!"

He thrust the papers into the bosom of his coat, and flung himself into the chair again.

A half-triumphant, half-reflecting expression resting upon his dusky face.

At that instant he chanced to look toward the rear window. The sash was flung up to let the passing breeze blow in. Margoun started in his seat and thrust his hand in his bosom.

Standing on the outside, looking in, was a tall, white-faced man, with a pistol in his hand. He was on the point of leveling the weapon; but the Hindoo's sudden movement disconcerted him, for he immediately turned and fled.

Like lightning Margoun darted forward, sprung through the open window, and disappeared.

The dark night was on.

These still lingered away; nor had Margoun returned. The servants had long since retired, and a brooding silence settled upon the Lodge.

Midnight with its ghostly associations came and passed. Then one o'clock.

A sharp pistol-shot rang out in the darkness near the Lodge. Then all was silent. But a few minutes later, a wild, almost unearthly groan echoed on the air. Then the same dreary silence settled down again, only broken by the sighing of the night-wind through the thick copse.

Early that same evening Mrs. Grayling sat silent and motionless in her chair.

A strange fire was burning in her pale blue eyes, and a frown brooded over her marble-like brow.

"Strange! Where can Florine be?" she ejaculated, moving restlessly in her chair. "I have hunted her high and low, and have sent messengers for her in every direction, but to no purpose. Her things are here; but—her brow wrinkled the more, "I miss more than a thousand dollars from my trunk! Can I suspect Florine, or Abner Denby? However, that sum is a trifle. But where can she be?"

Little did the proud lady dream that that night the stage-coach, on its way to Wyndham Station, had stopped at the Grange, that a woman carrying a small valise had entered it; and that now, as she mused in her chamber, Florine Flavell was speeding away toward New York city!

Mrs. Grayling arose from her seat and strode up and down the room with restless, uneasy step.

"Florine has been behaving very strangely of late," she thought, the frown upon her face deepening. "More than once she has been especially defiant, despite my independent position as mistress of the house."

"And tonight," she echoed, in a startled whisper, "Am I independently? Does not Florine Flavell hold me in her power? Ah! can she not fling me into a convict's cell? Can she not send me to the gib—"

A deadly pallor spread over her face, and she fell, rather than sunk, into a chair.

"I feel—yes, in the light of my power—I feel that clouds are hovering about me, and that vials of wrath will soon be—"

Again she tottered to her feet and promenade the room.

So absorbed was she that she heeded not the rattle of carriage-wheels in the lawn before the house, heeded not the loud, quick rap on the brass knocker of the door, nor the subdued sound of voices in the hall, mingled with the confused tramping of several feet.

Mrs. Grayling's keen senses were all concentrated in other directions—upon her own dark, distracted thoughts.

Up and down her room she continued to stride, but at last she suddenly halted, and clutched at the nearest chair for support.

A low, faint rap, as though struck by a timorous hand, had fallen upon her chamber door.

"Come in," she quickly responded, glancing at the door, and seeing see Florine Flavell enter.

But she started back in surprise as she saw old Betsy show her white, scared face.

"Well, old woman, what do you want?" she demanded, sharply.

"A gentleman, ma'am, as who—"

"Go on! Who is the gentleman? Who is he, and what does he want? Out with it!"

"A gentleman wishes to see you for a few moments, ma'am," stammered old Betsy.

"A gentleman! And wishes to see me at this time of night! Why, 'tis nine o'clock. Who is he?"

"Mr. Manton, ma'am—Mr. Thorle Manton."

Mrs. Grayling could not repress the shudder that shook her slender frame so suddenly; could not drive away the horrid tell-tale pallor that, in a bucket of time, had haunted her face.

"What does he want?" she gasped, in a voice that was almost sepulchral, her lips quivering with excitement.

"He wishes to see you a few minutes, ma'am," was the reply; and the old woman turned hastily away.

"Is any one with him?" asked Mrs. Grayling, earnestly.

"But old Betsy had already gone.

"What can this mean?" binned the lady, her eyes glaring with scorn. "Does he come to make a new contract about my secret? Bah! I will brave him to his teeth! I care no longer for the secret; I am rich; and it matters not whether I am known as Cynthia Summers, or as the young widow of Grayling Grange!"

And hastily arranging her hair, she left her chamber with a firm, haughty step. She strode directly toward the sitting-room. A moment she paused by the door and listened.

All was as still as the grave within.

"Yes! he is alone," she thought, with a low, derisive laugh as she turned the knob and entered the room.

But a low cry of alarm broke from her lips, as she flung a single glance around her. The proud, defiant glance faded from her eyes, the mocking smile fled from her lips, and she recoiled in ghastly fright.

The room contained the following persons: Thorle Manton, who was standing erect and stern by the table; Dr. Goodspeed, who was seated near by, his kindly face gloomed over with an expression of pain and sorrow; Abner Denby and Clara Dean, who sat close together, their faces filled with fear and wonder, while by the door, through which Mrs. Grayling had just passed, stood two brawny men with bronzed faces, and heavily armed.

For a moment, as his gaze fell upon the shrinking woman, Thorle Manton's face softened; and in an instant, as he saw her turn as if she would fly from the room, it grew hard and cold again.

"Look and guard well that door, officers," he said, quietly.

"Officers?" gasped the wretched woman, glancing around her.

"Be seated, madam, and calm yourself—if you can," said young Manton, in an icy tone.

"You are wanted here on serious business, on a matter of the sternest importance."

He thrust his hand in his bosom.

"What would you, Thorle Manton?" hissed the lady. "How dare you—"

"I have in my possession a certain paper, which was recently secured. It was written by your late husband, Gilbert Grayling. It is his will, written since the date of the instrument by which you secured Gilbert Grayling's immense property."

The poor woman struggled to her feet and exclaimed, as she again turned to the chair:

"'Tis false! false as perdition! You are hounding me to the death, and—"

"I have ample cause to hate you, madam," he

out in, sternly, though without losing his dignity; "but in this matter my object is not to triumph over a weak, misguided and wicked woman, but to secure justice to others. Ho, there! Come in, Silas Warren!" he continued, in a loud voice.

Instantly the door at the further side of the room opened, and Silas Warren, the old body-servant of Gilbert Grayling, who had been missing so long from the Grange, entered.

Every one, including Grace, who had come to the room but a moment before, was astounded.

"What—does—this—mean?" came in anguished tones from the stricken woman.

"Now, Silas, tell your tale briefly," said Thorle, not noticing Mrs. Grayling.

"Yes, sir," and the old man advanced.

"You see, I distrusted from the first glance I got of her, the new mistress of the Grange there; and on the very night of her arrival, I secretly followed her to her bedroom; and listening on the outside at her door, I heard strange whisperings between her and her dark-faced French maid."

He paused.

Mrs. Grayling writhed in her chair.



amazement, picking up the other paper, and opening it, read it through. His fingers trembled and the sheet slid from them.

"Margoum was a native prince, my darling," he said, sinking into a chair. "He revolted against what he considered a usurpation of his rights. But in view of his high caste, and great influence, he has been unconditionally restored to his full rank and to his great estates! Wonder upon wonder!"

Months upon months rolled by; the Centennial year of American Independence dawned upon the world.

One day Thorle Manton and his young wife were strolling through the grand exhibition grounds. Behind them came a nurse, rolling in a baby-carriage a youngster, who was just old enough to look at you, and dimple his face with smiles when you called him *Margoum*.

As the happy husband and party were passing the house occupied in the "grounds" by the English Commission, Thorle started violently as he saw, coming from the building, a tall, dusky-faced man in rich oriental garb. At his heels trod two attendants, attired almost as gorgeously as himself, who were evidently their master.

The swarthy foreigner drew nearer. His eyes suddenly fell upon Manton. He sprang forward.

"MARGOU!" and the two strong men were locked in a loving embrace.

And the youngster in the cradle looked up and laughed merrily as he heard his own name!

The two friends had met again.

But no word was spoken of the poor misguided one, over whose grave in the distant cemetery of Grayling Grange the summer grass had long been springing—no word was said of her, who in her brief young life had been: "The Loved of Many Men!"

THE END.

## CHRISTMAS SHADOWS.

The needles have dropped from her nerveless hands  
As she watches the dying embers glow,  
For out from the broad old chimney-place  
Come ghostly shadows of long ago!

Shadows that car-y her back again  
To the time of her childhood's artless joy;  
Shadows that show her a tiny row  
Of stockings awaiting the Christmas toy.

Shadows that show her the faces loved  
Of many a half-forgotten friend;  
And the Christmas Eve it is passing by,  
While Past and Present in shadows blend.

Alone in the dear old homestead now,  
With only the shadows of "Auld Lang Syne,"  
The clock is ticking the moments on,  
While tears in her aged eyes still shine.

If only from out the silent world—  
The world of shadows which mock her so—  
One might return to his vacant chair,  
To sit with her in the fire-light glow!

If only—Was that a white, white hand  
That seemed to ring for the Christmas morn?  
Or was it the embers' last bright flash  
That startled the shadows round the room?

The Christmas Eve has passed at length;  
A glorious day from the night is born;  
The shadows are gone from earth away,  
And the bells are ringing for Christmas morn.

But ah! by the broad old chimney-place  
The angel of death keeps watch alone,  
For straight to the Christmas beaming arms  
A longing spirit has gladly flown.

## Gold Dan:

OR,

The White Savages of the Great Salt Lake.

A TERRIBLE TALE OF THE DANITES OF MORMON LAND.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN,  
AUTHOR OF "VELVET HAND," "INJUN DICK,"  
"OVERLAND KIT," "WOLF DEMON,"  
"WITCHES OF NEW YORK,"  
"BLACK DIAMOND," ETC.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

## A MILL TALK.

The elder was down, mortally hurt. Just a single moan of agony, and then all was over; the ball had struck him square in the temple, just above the nose.

For a moment the Danite chief stared, astonished at the fearful sight—the dreadful work of an unknown foe, for the shot had come from the window, fired by some one concealed in the grounds without. The secret slayer had spared the dark Danite chief and selected the elder as a victim, that was evident.

And yet, without the house, there was not a sign to denote the presence of a living creature, bird, beast, or human.

The Danite turned to the casement and surveyed the grounds without. Twenty paces away was the open stockade gate, left open by the Danite himself on his hurried entrance. Through this the unknown foe had fired the fatal shot, and then had fled.

"Was it a friend or foe?" the dark Danite mused. "If a friend, why did he not wait that I might know whom to thank for the service, for, in truth, this brutal dog meant to kill me, if I interfered in his schemes."

Thus contemptuously did the agent of Mormon vengeance refer to the man now weltering in his gore, who, living, had been one of the "pillars of the church of Zion."

As the Danite gazed upon the ghastly face of the dead man, a strange feeling of terror came stealing over his heart of iron.

There was no mistaking the mark of the bullet. The self-same hand which had laid the burly Googler low, in the street of Corinne, had given his brother Mormon his death-wound! The mark of the big derringer bullet proved that, and then instantly to his mind flashed thoughts of Gold Dan; but if Dan had dealt this blow, why had he not spared the Mormon and taken him, the one he had most to fear?

The Danite glared around him, apparently seeking an answer to the question, and then, upon the stillness of the night, rung the sounds of a horse's hoofs, urged to topmost speed.

Was the new-comer friend or foe?  
A horseman came dashing through the gate, reined up his steed so abruptly that the brute came trembling back upon his haunches, and then threw himself to the ground.

It was the Texan!  
And so white—so full of excitement that he seemed like a maniac.

He darted into the house, and pistol in hand, stood trembling at the door, eagerly listening as if he had been pursued by a score of fiends, and then threw himself to the ground.

"What's the matter?" asked the Texan, in his deep-toned voice, so quiet and yet so full of command, advancing as he spoke and laying his broad palm upon the shoulder of the other.

"This man! he is a devil! I cannot kill him!" the breathless, gasping horseman exclaimed, shivering with nervous excitement, and yet evidently feeling the soothing restraint of Clark's powerful will.

"You speak of Gold Dan?"

"Yes."

"You have not killed him, then?"

"Yes, I have killed him twice," the man answered, incoherently, the nervous excitement beginning to subside, and with it the frantic strength which had sustained him so well during the wild scenes of the night. His breath came heavily, and he leaned for support against the door-casement.

"Killed him twice, eh?" the Danite repeated; "why he must have as many lives as a cat."

"Through a trick, I lured him from his house, and then the instant his head appeared without the door, I drove a bullet into his skull at a foot's distance."

"Well, that ought to have settled any ordinary man," Clark observed, in his quiet way, still keeping a close watch with his keen eyes upon the agitated face of the other.

"And then when he fell prostrate at my feet—fell like a log, hewed down by the ax of the chopper—to make my vengeance more certain, I emptied my revolvers into his body."

"And yet he escaped?" Clark exclaimed, jumping to a quick conclusion.

"I tell you I saw him dead at my feet!" the man cried, vehemently, "with no more life in him than is in the raw-hide fastened to yonder saddle, blood gushing from him from a half-dozen wounds, each one big enough to let out a life."

"Oh, then he is dead!" Clark began to believe that the man was either drunk or crazy.

"No, he is not dead, or else if he is dead his spirit haunts me!" the Texan cried, trembling with excitement and his fierce, black eyes rolling in such frenzy that they seemed likely to pop out of his head.

Clark laughed grimly; neither man nor devil could daunt his soul; the first he despised, the second he doubted. He had seen many a stout fellow go down in fierce and bloody fire, fated never to rise again in life, but never a one of them all had ever come back to revisit the glimpses of the moon, to his knowledge.

"After I had slain him," the Texan continued, "after I had given him wounds enough to let out the lives of six men, I flung myself upon my horse, and fled. I rode straight to your den, just as you directed. I found the horse there, as you told me I should. I mounted, and rode straight for this point, according to the instructions fastened to the saddle; but an hour ago, when I turned into the main trail, who should I come face to face with, but this man!"

"With Gold Dan?"

"Yes; unhurt—unharmful!"

"You are sure?"

"Yes; either he it was, or the devil in his likeness."

"And what did you do?"

"Fired six more shots, straight at his heart!"

"Yes!"

"And he fell, all bloody as before."

"And you fled again?"

"Yes."

"Without waiting to see whether your shots had really taken effect or not?"

"I waited for nothing," the man answered, wildly. "I fled; that is all. Wait! you will see his spirit come riding up soon!"

From the wildness of the man's manner, the idea occurred to the Danite that all his story was but the fancy of a disordered brain, and so he resolved to act accordingly.

"I have changed my plans," he said, abruptly. "Instead of going to Salt-Lake I want you to return to my den in the mountains, and keep close there till I come to you."

"I will, but I will not return the way I came," the man replied, with a shudder; "his spirit bars the path!" And then, without more words, he flung himself into the saddle and rode off in the direction of Salt-Lake.

"Poor devil! he's mad!" the Danite exclaimed.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

## THE SECRET SLAYER AGAIN.

The Texan had fled at his horse's topmost speed, and the Danite watched his departure in amazement.

"It's no use to send him to Salt-Lake as long as he is in this condition," he muttered. "The man is a lunatic beyond a doubt. I don't believe that he's seen Gold Dan at all; in madness he dreams of delusions."

The sound of the hoof-beats of the flying steed died away in the distance, and the Danite dismissed the subject from his mind.

"Now for Polly," he murmured, as he turned and again looked upon the body of the Mormon, slain so mysteriously by the secret assassin.

"Whoever fired the shot did me a service, for Biddeman meant mischief," he mused. "The girl is up-stairs, I suppose. Poor child! it was a narrow escape for her; this fellow would have had no mercy upon her, and to think that for years I have been low and degraded enough to do the dirty work of such rascals as this house and the rest of his brethren! Bah! I am worse than a red-skin!"

With this contemptuous exclamation, the Danite proceeded to search the ranch in order to discover the prison-place of the girl, which was soon found, and great was the joy of the captive when she looked upon the stern face of the Danite chief.

Man of blood though he was, hated by some and feared by all, yet on this occasion he seemed like a guardian angel to the girl.

"Oh, Mr. Clark, you will take me away from this dreadful place, won't you?" she cried.

"Yes, you are free to depart; no one will attempt to detain you," he answered.

"And Mr. Biddeman?" Polly questioned, with a timid glance around as though she feared the burly Mormon would step forward and attempt to prevent her departure.

"You need have no more fear of him," replied Clark, in his grim way. "He will never trouble anybody any more, in this world."

The girl understood his meaning, and a slight shudder passed over her slender frame.

"And you had to kill him to save me?" she asked, grateful and yet regretful that blood had been shed.

"No, he did not fall by my hand, although as things stood, the chances were that he would either kill me or I him, within ten minutes, when some unknown party settled the matter by shooting the elder through the window."

"And you do not know who it was?"

"No; not the slightest idea, excepting that it was no friend to the Mormons, and perhaps not to me, although, if the party had chosen, he might as easily have settled me as the elder, for I was nearest to the window."

"Oh, let me get away from this horrid place!" the girl cried, impulsively, advancing toward the door.

The Danite moved to one side, to allow her to pass.

She paused, irresolutely, in the entry.

"I am afraid to go alone," she said; "will you not come with me?"

"Afraid to go alone, and yet not afraid to trust me?" he asked, his strong voice growing quite soft, and even tender.

Trustfully she extended her hand to him.

"No; I am not at all afraid of you, though men do talk evil of you."

The stern face of the Danite seemed to grow darker and sterner than ever, as he took the little hand of the girl, and conducted her down the stairs.

"The horses are in the corral," he said, as

they paused by the open door of the ranch; "within an hour's time, you shall be safe at home."

"Oh, how can I ever repay you for this great kindness?" she exclaimed, in an outburst of gratitude.

"Repay me!" he replied, and his voice seemed to tremble as he spoke; "why, when you hear men speak of John Clark—when you hear him called a villain and a cutthroat, just close your ears and try to remember that, bad as he was, he dared to brave the wrath of the Saints of Utah by rescuing you, a helpless victim, from their hands."

"Why do you stay here?" she cried, abruptly. "This is not the only country in all the world! If you were to go to some far-off land, no one there would know any thing about you; you could begin life anew, and if you haven't done quite right in the past, you can strive to make up for it by doing a great deal of good in the future."

"Polly, your advice is good, and I ought to act upon it," he replied, slowly, "but it's hard work for a man to get out of the traces when once he's fairly in; besides, I haven't got anything to live for, and I might as well die here as anywhere else. There's a tough time ahead for the Mormons, or I'm out in my reckoning. In the future they won't be able to carry matters with the same high hand that they have done in the past. No, Polly, I'll stay here and die in my tracks, with my boots on, as many a better man than me has done."

"Isn't there any thing that will induce you to quit this life and go away?" she asked, earnestly.

And as she put the question, looking eagerly with her big, blue eyes full into the dark-browed face of the Danite, a wild wish came up in the stern heart, which long ago he had believed to be dead to all tender emotions.

"Yes, Polly, one thing would induce me to go away and make a new try for it."

"Oh, go—do go!" she cried, impulsively.

"If I could get a little girl like you, Polly, to go with me—to devote her young life to trying to make a better man of me, why, I'd try the rifle!"

The girl colored in confusion, and yet her embarrassment was not unmixed with joy, for in her heart of hearts she favored this great giant of a man—this terrible Danite chief, Long John Clark, Duke of Corinne.

It was the old story. As the poet says:

"In joining continents lieh love's delights,  
Hence hands of snow in palms of russet lie;  
The form of Hercules affects the sylphs;  
And forms that ease the lion's fear-proof heart,  
Find their loved lodge in breasts where tremors dwell."

"Polly, what do you say?" the Danite asked; "will you go with me? I'm no Mormon with a dozen wives! In fact, in all my life, I never before saw the woman that was worth two straws to me until you came across my path; but you, why, I've seen you grow up from a child, and I've watched over you as a father would watch over his first-born, and when I heard that this brute of a Mormon had lured you away, I made up my mind to have you back, if it cost a dozen lives. In their Mormon dog, but I'm ugly sometimes, and just as apt to bite friend as foe; they know it, too, and there's not one of the Saints, from Brigham downward, but will think twice before he crosses the path of John Clark. Come! say the word, and I'll take you miles and miles away from here! We'll go 'way off over the Rockies to the golden shores of the Pacific; we'll find a home amid the foot-hills, where we can forget the past—forget that we ever knew such a place as this modern Sodom of Utah!"

"I will go anywhere with you," the girl said, simply and shyly, hiding her face upon his broad breast as she spoke.

Heaven help me to treat you well, so that you may never have cause to regret this step!" the Danite exclaimed, earnestly, stooping his massive head and touching the forehead of the girl with his lips.

And then, as the soft sound of the caress trembled on the air, there came the sharp, quick bark of a pistol-shot, fired from the extreme end of the entry in the rear; the door suddenly slammed to and the key turned in the lock outside.

A stifled gasp of mortal agony came from the red lips of the girl; her head sunk back, and as quick as the lightning's flash the consciousness came to John Clark that he held a piece of lifeless clay within his arms.

For a moment he stood, like one turned into stone, and then a step in the front door seemed to rouse him into action again, and, turning, he faced Gold Dan upon the threshold!

## CHAPTER XXIX.

## A CLEW AT LAST.

FRAMED in the open doorway appeared the figure of the plainsman, gazing with astonished eyes upon the tragic scene.

Involuntarily the strong right hand of the Danite grasped the butt of his revolver, while at the same time with the other he supported the helpless form of the stricken girl.

But Gold Dan was on the alert; he had been assailed too often lately to permit himself to be again taken at a disadvantage. His revolver was out, and with the shining tube he covered the broad chest of the Danite chief.

"Don't attempt to lift your hand, or I'll drill a hole right through you!" he cried. "I'm not seeking a quarrel, but if it does come, I'll have the first crack!"

The thought of the Danite had been that the plainsman was the author of the mischief done to the girl, but a moment's reflection dispelled the idea. The shot had been fired from the rear, and almost at the same moment that Gold Dan had appeared in the front doorway.

Clearly it was impossible that he could be the secret slayer.

In the mind of the Danite there was not the slightest doubt that the shot had been aimed at his life, but a sudden movement of the girl had baffled the plan, and at a fearful cost.

"Go your way, stranger!" cried Clark; "you and I will never be friends, but at the present moment I seek only the cowardly hood who fired the shot that has resulted so terribly."

"Is she dead, poor child?"

"Alas! I fear so," and big tears stood in the eyes of the stern, strong man.

A convulsive movement unclosed the lips of the stricken girl, and a few words escaped from them.

It was the last effort of life.

"Oh, how could you kill me?" she murmured, and then she whispered a name; so low and faint that it seemed only a sigh, but the quick ears of the Danite caught the sound, and a look of wonder passed over his face.

"Can it be possible?" he murmured. He bent over the girl as though he fain would have questioned her, but it was too late; the spirit had fled, and stern John Clark saw that he held a lifeless form within his arms.

Slowly, and as gently as a mother soothing her first-born, the fierce chief of border war carried the helpless form and deposited it upon the rude settee, which formed part of the furniture of the room, laid the nerveless arms carefully across the swelling bosom, that, but a few short minutes before had beat with joy and hope, and then he turned and faced the plainsman, who still lingered upon the threshold.

"You seek something—what is it?"

"A tall, dark fellow who has twice attempted my life to-night," replied Gold Dan, promptly.

"What have I to do with him?"

"Is he not one of your gang?"

"My gang?" Clark asked, slowly, but with a vacant expression upon his face, which plainly revealed that his thoughts were far away.

"Yes, a Danite."

"Oh, no."

The denial did not convince the plainsman.

"Twice, to-night, have I escaped him almost by a miracle," he said. "He came this way, and I have followed close upon his footsteps. This is a Mormon ranch, and just the place to afford him shelter."

"He is not here."

"But he has been here!"

"Perhaps."

"And where is he now?"

The Danite shook his head.

"If he was one of my gang, as you evidently believe, do you suppose, for a single instant, that I would give you any information in regard to him? I say to you that he is not here."

There is no one here beside myself and two lifeless bodies. If you doubt me, search the house; you are welcome to do so, as far as I am concerned. For the present, I do not wish to quarrel with you—I do not wish to quarrel with any mortal soul until I have hunted down the slayer of this poor child, and given him to as cruel a death as the mind of man can invent, and then, after that is accomplished, I'm your meat, or anybody else's."

The plainsman was a little puzzled by the speech; yet it bore truth on the face of it. It was of no use, then, to waste time here, and of little avail to push onward, dismounted as he was, and so he determined to return to Corinne for the present, and there deliberate over a course of action.

"All right! I seek no quarrel except with this fellow who has twice attempted to murder me unawares. The next time we meet, perhaps the chances will be more even, and then if he escapes me, I won't complain," and with this speech, Gold Dan turned and strode away, leaving the Danite chief alone with the dead.

Motionless as a statue Clark stood until the sound of the plainsman's step died away in the distance. The Danite seemed like a man stunned by a heavy blow. In truth, it was a terrible shock. For years Clark had led the life of an outcast and a wanderer. Few of womankind had ever attracted his eyes, and they, such as they were, were but toys to amuse a passing hour. But this girl—this child, so young, so innocent, so different from the bold, coarse women, the painted "angels" of the frontier towns, that she seemed like a creature cast in a different mold, had entwined herself around his heart, and now that she was torn suddenly from him, it seemed as if a great piece of his life was gone.

He walked slowly over to her side, and gazed wistfully at the pretty face now cold in death.

"If she had only lived, I might have become a different man," he muttered. "John Clark, the Danite leader—Long John Clark, the Duke of Corinne, would never more have struck terror into the souls of the Gentiles; a simple ranchman, I might have forgotten the old life, and amid my stock have led a new existence. But it was fated not to be. It is my doom, then, that I must still remain the Mormon sword—the destroying angel, the leader of the white savages, until some well-aimed bullet cuts short my thread of life and sends me to join my victims in the other world."

And then, as he stood and gazed with longing eyes upon the girl's face now stiffening in death, thoughts of the man who fired the fatal shot filled his mind; his dark face grew darker still, and a terrible oath came from his lips.

"I'll hunt him down, though all Corinne oppose me!" he cried, fiercely. "But am I sure of my game? I heard the name distinctly from the girl's lips; I think she saw him fire at me, and periled her own life to save mine. He is the secret assassin, then, who has been laying the Mormons low. It is more than possible; he, too, is the miner who has been working the lodes near Bear River, and whom we have driven off. It is plain, now, how he has managed to live all this time, but who would have believed that there was any harm in him? I know that he hated the Mormons, but I never thought that he would ever do them any mischief. I can understand now, why he killed Googler. It was Googler who drove him away from his hidden lair, but he's struck his last blow, now; before this time, to-morrow, I will have settled him for this world."

One long, lingering look the stern, dark-browed man took at the cold and silent face, and then, stooping, he kissed the icy lips; the touch sent a chill even to his iron heart.

"I am growing womanish," he muttered, "but I'll have a bloody vengeance for this night's work!"

He closed the house up carefully, so that no strollers could enter, and then hurried away.

Straight to the lair of the Danites, on Antelope island, he went, called together his rough followers and bade them prepare for the war-path.

"Look well to your weapons," the chief of the "angels" cautioned, "for we may have a hot time before we get through."

"Where-away, Cap?" asked one of the outlaws.

"Corinne, I reckon," Clark replied. "The sharps there carried things with a pretty high hand, the other night, but we mean business this time, and we'll take force enough to wipe out the whole town, if Corinne even so much as crooks a finger at us."

"That's the talk!" cried one of the gang, merrily, and the rest chimed in in assent.

A free fight was meant to these bull-dogs.

To be continued—commenced in No. 400.

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I. L



## ON HAND.

BY JOE JOY, JR.

The mouth may have its power of speech,  
But ah, what meaning lingers  
About the motions of the hand—  
The still and voiceless fingers!

A boy's father's palm may get  
Although unspeaking, silent,  
Yet he will know just what it means  
However quick and violent.

The bride she gives her mate her hand;  
It means a free love-token;  
He gets it often after that  
When'er the peace is broken.

When on your ear a hand should drop  
And make your senses mystic,  
It means the owner is quite mad  
And somewhat pugilistic.

If fingers in your hair should be  
Provokingly entangled,  
They mean it would be better far  
If you had never wrangled.

If some friend holds two fingers up,  
Just take it, then, as granted  
That something in the shape of V,  
Or rather "five" is wanted.

Five fingers rolled into a wad,  
And cast at your proboscis,  
Means, with peculiar emphasis,  
It's very bad on noses.

A finger pointed at you has  
A meaning rather mournful,  
More than all fingers of the hand—  
Indeed, it's rather scornful.

The finger which your hearer puts  
So tender on his sleeve  
Symbolical that what you tell  
Is something of a lie is.

A thumb placed gently on the nose,  
The fingers free for action,  
Reminds you that you are defied  
Unto your satisfaction.

So hands and fingers have a speech  
Whose reading will not bother,  
Which you are always sure to catch  
In one way or another.

And when I reach my hand to you,  
Kind reader, softly take it;  
It speaks of friendship tried and true  
As any heart can make it.

## Woods and Waters;

OR,

## The Rambles of the Littleton Gun Club.

BY LAUNCE POYNTZ.

VIII.

IN A DUCK-BOAT.

It was long before dawn the next morning when old Mart shook me by the arm as I lay in bed, and whispered:

"Get up, Launce, of you and Charley want fun. Tom's goin' to take the greeneries out, and we're to have our route all to ourselves."

Of course it took but little time for me to get ready. Charley Green and I had arranged matters with Mart the night before, and the old man had promised to take us under his charge for the day. He seemed to have conceived an especial liking for Charley Green of late, possibly on account of the lad's humility and desire to learn. Charley was in the same room as myself, and it was not long before we were both dressed and following Mart down-stairs.

As we passed the rooms of the rest of the party, the audible snores proclaimed that the occupants were still fast asleep, but we found the keeper of the light-house up and frying salt pork, fish, and who knows what else, before the old-fashioned stove in the sitting-room, where the genial warmth and smell were alike gratifying to the senses.

"Eat all ye kin, as hot as ye kin bear it, and swaller all the hot coffee ye kin pour down," was Mart's advice, which we were not slow to follow; for the cold morning had given us an appetite. Captain Bruce was the only other member of the party who was down with us in the dark, and he it was who came out with us after breakfast to the wharf.

It was still quite dark on the land, and the water was hidden from view by a damp, chilly mist that had settled over the whole river, but a dim grayish glow could be seen far away overhead in the east, that told of coming dawn.

By the wharf lay a whole fleet of boats and scows, with head and stern lines crossing each other in every degree of complexity. Mart seized one of the lines and drew up a small skiff, sharp at both ends, decked over at bow and stern, and having an oval well in the center in which to sit. Bruce drew up a similar one, close by, and motioned me to jump in, while Charley Green unconsciously himself in Mart's craft. The guns were handed into the boats, and Bruce and Mart followed, when we cast off the lines from rings in the stern of the boats, into which they fastened with snap-hooks, and let them drop into the water. Tom Smith threw us the ends of the bow-lines, and we shoved off, pulling out into the stream.

"These North River duck-boats," said Bruce to me, as we pulled away, "are a good deal more elaborate than they use out West or on the Chesapeake. There, any sort of a box that will hold a man and his gun will do for a duck-boat. Here on this river there is so much current and tide, and the sea comes so heavy at times, when the wind blows against stream, that a swift boat and a dry crew are alike required. Hence they use this kind of covered canoe. It pulls easy against sea or current, and it is almost impossible to swamp it in any weather, on account of its decks and the hatch-combing around us."

"Yes," I said, "but isn't it pretty cranky?"

"Of course it is. We can't have speed and stability together in a boat of this size. If you want to cut the water you must have a narrow, sharp hull, and such a hull will roll. All you have to do is to sit down low in the boat and mind your balance. You notice that the oars don't rest in row-locks, but pass through rings, and each ring has a pin which goes into a hole in the gunwale of the boat. You see that when one is out rowing alone, with his gun before him, it may be necessary to drop the oars at times and shoot. This method prevents the oars from being lost, and is very general on all American river-boats, whether for ducking or fishing."

As he spoke, we were apparently entirely alone on the water, a sea of gray mist shutting out the shore and our companions alike, while we groped about in Cimmerian darkness. Still, Bruce seemed to be entirely certain of which way to pull, for he bent to his oars with a will.

"How do you know which way to go, Bruce?" I at last inquired, rather timidly.

"Well now, Poyntz," he said, with a smile, "I hardly expected that question from a man of your sense. We're trying to go up-stream, and if you'll take these oars, you'll very soon feel the difference between that and any other method of progression."

"But, where are we going?" I inquired.

"We're going up to the feeding grounds of the ducks," he answered. "The river up here is full of islands, formed by accidental obstructions to the current, and these islands are all low and marshy at the edges. Some of them are made of nothing but mud, like those in the delta of the Mississippi, while others have bold rocky bluffs. This part of the river is very little visited by tourists, who either stop at West Point or Catskill, or else pass on in the boats to Albany, on the way to Saratoga. The consequence is that we have a good deal of game still left. It has not all been killed off."

We stopped suddenly and listened intently. We heard a confused, fluttering noise ahead of us in the fog.

"Ducks," whispered Bruce, and he dropped his oars, letting the boat drift. The next moment he and I sat in the boat, gun in hand, gazing upward.

The fluttering sound continued, mingled with quacks, and increased into a regular thunder of wings, and the next moment we heard the mov-

ing body of ducks passing overhead. It was dark below, but glowing light above, and we could see faint shadows as the flock passed.

A flash illuminated the gloom ahead of us, and then another, followed by two loud reports.

"Now, Launce, give it to them!" whispered Bruce, and two birds fell into the moving shadows, ghostlike and ill-defined.

Then we sat and listened.

The thunder of wings was changed to a confused fluttering, mingled with loud cries of alarm; and yet, through all this noise, we heard three distinct splashes close to the boat. Bruce dropped his gun, seized the oars and backed the boat down-stream with three or four strokes, then let it drift, while he leaned over the side.

"Watch your side, Poyntz!" he said, hurriedly.

I strained my eyes through the lessening gloom; and there, close by the boat, lay a dead duck, floating, feet up, which I seized as it went down-stream. Almost at the same minute, Bruce seized one oar and sent the boat whirling off to the left, when he leaned over the side and swung in a second duck.

"That's all we'll get this morning, I think," he announced, quietly. "The fog's too thick to find the other. We must pull away to the ground, and that flock will come back. We frightened them."

Bump! came something against the boat, and we heard Mart's voice.

"Pokin' round in the dark like spooks! What have ye done? We've scared five ducks for ye."

"Then one of them is ours," declared Bruce. "I heard three splashes."

"We won't quarrel over it, Cap," said the old hunter, good-naturedly. "We've had mighty good luck, anyways. Now the fog's light. Look there!"

He pointed away to one side.

We were close to a low reed-fringed shore and the fog was rising every minute.

"Here's our ground," he exclaimed old Mart, "and yonder's the blind. Comshore!"

(To be continued, commenced in No. 401.)

## A "Lovers' Telegraph."

BY HENRI MONTCLAIR.

ONE Saturday evening, between ten and eleven o'clock, Fred Purple, assistant cashier of the Countdown National Bank, sat at his desk, busily engaged upon some bank work that must be finished before Sunday.

Every few minutes Fred would go through a series of motions that to any uninitiated observer would have appeared to be a most reprehensible and ridiculous. He would bring his lips into close proximity to a sort of metallic bowl that was fixed just before him on the desk, and with a perfectly serious voice and manner would say to it:

"I hope you are not getting sleepy, dear!"

And then, substituting his ear for his lips, he would seem to listen intently for a reply that was certainly quite inaudible at any distance; and would then add, with a satisfied air:

"Well, don't get impatient, darling. I shall finish this job in fifteen minutes more."

The intelligent reader, who of course keeps pace with all the great discoveries and improvements of the times, will not fail to understand that this metallic bowl, which the assistant cashier in so endearing a manner was addressing, was one terminus of a Telephone; and he hasten to explain that the companion "receiver" or mouth-piece was located some distance down the village street at the residence of the widow Farwell, whose daughter Jennie was Fred Purple's sweetheart.

Fred was an ingenious young man, and had early taken advantage of Professor Bell's wonderful invention to establish a means of communication between the bank and Mrs. Farwell's cottage, so that he could keep up a conversation with Jennie even when he was away from her.

It may be added, too, that the existence of this apparatus was known with the exception of the parties most directly interested, only to Mr. Jackson, the cashier. The board of directors would have held up its twelve hands in holy horror had they known of it. They were men of the "old foggy" type, who regarded all modern improvements as in every way ruinous and to be religiously avoided. Consequently they coldly voted down a motion once made by the cashier to have the bank connected with his house by a burglar alarm; they refused point-blank to have anything to do with telegraphs and telephones; and they even went so far as to turn twelve deaf ears to an enterprising lightning-rod man who wished to insure the bank against being struck by the electric fluid. Old-fashioned iron shutters on the windows, old-fashioned bolts and bars on the doors and an old-fashioned safe for the money were good enough for them.

At a quarter before eleven Fred had just one more column of figures to add. He had gone ticklishly up the "units" row and was already half way down the "tens" when he felt, all at once, a hand laid heavily upon his shoulder. Greatly startled, he looked around; and then he rubbed his eyes to assure himself that he was not, as he had ever seen—stood behind his chair, one with a heavy bar of iron in his hand. Of course Fred knew in an instant what they were there for.

"You'll excuse us, young feller"—it was the man with the bar in his grasp who spoke—"but interruptin' yer. But we concluded yer wasn't goin' ter git through at all to-night, and we've got ter be some ways from here by mornin'!"

"What do you want?" Fred asked, with pardonable trepidation.

"We want the twenty thousand dollars that's in that safe."

"But the keys are not here. Jackson keeps them up at his house."

"We know that, well enough; but it won't take us long to get the keys out of his left armpit. Ef ye don't mind, we'll jest wind this bit of string around yer a few times jest ter keep ye from squirmin'." It'll make it more binding, ye know."

"Oh, certainly," said Fred, in as pleasant a tone as he could command under the circumstances.

He knew very well that he could not help himself and he put the best face possible on the matter.

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Fred nodded ruefully. Yes, he understood very well, and he had not the remotest idea of doing anything to bring down upon himself so uncomfortable an infliction. He could see that they meant what they said.

So the leader, with one of the others, paying no more attention to Fred, set to work with the various implements of their trade to open the door of the safe, while "Jennies," a heavily-built and dangerous-looking but apparently not ill-natured person, remained beside the young man, with the bar of iron in his hand and his restless eyes wandering about the room, returning every few seconds to rest upon his prisoner.

The latter, as has been said, was tied down in just the position in which he had been sitting, with his arms on the desk and his chin in his hands. Moreover, though he did not yet realize

it, his mouth was within a few inches of the telephone. He presently felt disposed to say something to the man behind him.

"This is a comfortable position for a man to be in," said he.

"Yer might be in a worse one," replied "Jennies," sympathetically.

And then, to Fred's sudden surprise and delight, from the mouth of the telephone, distinctly, yet so low that he himself barely caught the murmur of the words, came a sentence from Jennie Farwell.

"I am particularly comfortable for me, I can assure you. If you don't pay better attention, and talk to me once in a while, I shall go to bed."

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"Perhaps I might," he said. "I doubt it, though. Just think of it! Here—" he turned his head as he was speaking, and spoke the rest of his sentence directly into the telephone, without the slightest pause or change of tone—"here I am, tied down in my chair, with a man behind me ready to knock me in the head if I utter a cry!"

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"Hear? Of course I hear. D'ye s'pose I've got cotton in my ears?"

"Well, then," Fred slowly went on, running over in his mind all the while how best to shape his sentence so as, without exciting suspicion, to convey to Jennie what he wished to say. "Do you know what I would do if I were out of this? I would," here he turned to the telephone again and delivered the rest of his sentence as before, "I would, if anybody'd think, in the recesses of his mind, to make him up and tell him to bring help at once! There isn't a minute to spare!"

Fred fairly hissed the last words into the instrument—overcome by his anxiety to make Mr. Jackson, the cashier, understand, and get the help of the man behind him. A low growl in his ear instantly recalled the latter's presence. "Jennies" was eying him suspiciously.

Look here, young feller, what are ye tryin' to do? Anybody'd think—" Then he took a step forward, interrupting himself. "What is that thing yer talkin' inter?"

He stooped over and peered into the telephone. Then again his eyes sought Fred's with an ugly expression.

"Is look like a bell or suthin'," he continued. And then, with a fierce oath, "Ef I thought yer was up ter anything underhanded with thet thar, I'd—"

He finished his sentence by raising his weapon threateningly toward Fred.

Fred gave an uneasy little laugh.

"Pooh!" said he. "You need not fret yourself about that. It is a bell, of course; but you're not such a fool, are you, as not to know it would ring, if it rung at all?"

"Jennies" reflected a moment, and seeming at length satisfied that his suspicions were undeserved, he relaxed into his former silence.

Fred listened painfully for some word from Jennie; but if she answered at all it had been so low that he could not hear it.

There was nothing more to be done but sit quietly and await the progress of events. He could not doubt that the girl had understood him; and before this she was probably on her way to arouse Mr. Jackson. The cashier was a fearless and energetic man, and, once acquainted with the facts, he would lose no time in organizing a rescue.

It was nervous work for Fred Purple for the next fifteen minutes—tied and helpless, listening to the ticking of the calendar clock, the deep breathing of his guardian and the murmured conversation of the two other men as they worked steadily away upon the lock. At one moment, as he realized that any attack or interruption would result in his death, he almost wished he had made no attempt to betray the presence of the robbers; and then, as he heard the leader congratulating himself that he should make even quicker work of the lock than he had thought, his only fear was that Jackson would not appear in time.

At last, with an exclamation of satisfaction, the leader of the three gave a wrench to his instrument and threw open the door of the vault; and then Fred, who by turning his head could watch the operations very conveniently, saw them take up their lantern and go inside. As for "Jennies," he still sat there, stolid and faithful, his eyes roving often about the room, always returning at short intervals to observe his charge.

Jennie had latterly taken his seat on a high stool at Fred's side, and was so situated that his back was toward his two companions.

Hardly a minute seemed to have elapsed after the disappearance of the two burglars when the cashier came back, looking surprised and joy he saw a gray head, which he recognized at once as Mr. Jackson's, appear around the corner of the vault and take a hasty survey of the apartment. So great was Fred's astonishment at seeing him, he for a moment believed that by some sudden movement he had been less firmly bound. But "Jennies," from where he sat, could not see the delight that only showed itself in Fred's eyes.

Fred waited breathlessly another minute. The vault door was closed, and the men were probably now in consultation with them.

Then once more a head appeared—this time the head of McPherson, the chief constable of the town—a powerful man, who now stepped forward and asked "Jennies" how the robbery was getting on.

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At the last moment, Jennie Farwell appeared, trembling and tearful, followed timidly by Tommy Jackson. The first thing the girl did was to go and seize Fred's hand. And then, since she did not then and there dare kiss him and must kiss something, she walked straight up to the telephone and kissed it.

"I wonder what the Board will say now," Fred remarked to the cashier, as they were leaving the bank.

"I don't know what they'll say; but I know what they'll do. They will raise your salary. And so they did; and Fred and Jennie were able to marry shortly after that—thanks to their "Lovers' Telegraph."

A SADDENED THOUGHT IN VESTING.

BY H. S. KELLER.

A little patch of heather brown,  
A silken moon reclining,  
A rolling slope of meadow's crown,  
A nature's group combining;

A bro on wheel, a crumbling mill,  
A silent pond and rushes,  
A stream not longer gushes;  
A stream no longer gushes;

A dying hope, a silent tomb  
That safely holds in token,  
A bended faith, a solemn gloom,  
A loving heart that's broken;

A grassy mound, a slab of white,  
A sleeping spirit resting;  
A silvery moon, a pale starlight,  
A saddened thought investing!

Base-Ball.

BY HENRY CHADWICK.

THE CATCHING OF 1877.

SPLENDID work was accomplished in the catcher's position in the professional arena during 1877. Indeed, never before in the history of the game was such fine play behind the bat witnessed as during the past season. Never before had the average pace of the pitching been so swift or difficult to attend to as it was in 1877. Not only was the speed of the ball great, but the horizontal curve imparted to it made it very difficult to judge correctly, and it required the utmost activity at the hands of catchers to escape letting balls pass them.

Considering the speed and character of the delivery from the curved-line pitchers, the comparatively small number of passed balls recorded against catchers was quite a remarkable feature of the season's play. Hitherto players have received salaries more in accordance with an average reputation as players in the field and at the bat compared rather than for their special excellence as occupants of one regular home position in the field.

In this way it has frequently occurred that an out-fielder has received a higher salary than a catcher; witness the case of George Hall's \$2,800 a year against Clapp's \$2,000. The catcher's duties are now of such an onerous nature that he is placed far ahead of any out-fielder in the value of his services. Indeed, the catcher and pitcher of a professional team are entitled to a third more salary than any out-fielder receives, and a fourth more than any others of the in-fielders, except the one who acts as captain of the team.

In other words, if a catcher receives \$1,500 for a season's service, a base-player should not receive over \$1,200, and an out-fielder not more than \$900.

Just as fine play—better play in one instance—was exacted from the catchers of out-fielders as was shown by the catchers of the League Nines. The latter included Allison, Snyder, Brown, Clapp, Harbridge, McVey, Anson, Dorgan, Hicks, Hastings, and Miller, the four first named taking the lead.

White only played as catcher in three games, he occupying first base in 1877. Outside the League arena were Flint, Higham, Powers and Hotelling as the leading catchers whom we saw play. Allison played a masterly game behind the bat, but in good physical trim for his work.

In fact, in close play he cannot be beat, especially in capturing low balls to the left of the batsman. He is not quick enough in returning to the pitcher, however, in which respect Clapp excels. This is an important point in the catcher's play. By promptly and accurately returning the ball to the pitcher, the latter player is enabled to make a rapid delivery to the bat—not rapid as regards the pace but quick in repetition; besides which he is thereby enabled to keep a closer watch on base-runners, and the latter decidedly prefer to run bases when the ball is in the hands of the catcher, than when the pitcher has it ready to throw.

The catchers of the past season had a habit of playing close up to the bat, when no base-runner occupied a base, after the second called ball or strike. Now the average of foul balls from the bat which come within the catcher's reach shows figures of over six to one in favor of balls offering chances for outs to the catcher standing at the end of his position. In other words, six chances for high foul-ball catches or long foul-ball tips are offered where one is presented sharp from the bat. This is the general rule. To play up behind the bat, therefore, when there is no base-runner behind the bat, is a loss of chances for long foul tips or high foul balls back of home base. We see nothing that can be gained by it except an opportunity to show the catcher's skill in close play, and he gets plenty of opportunities of this kind when base-runners are in position.

Snyder did some wonderful play behind the bat in September in supporting Devlin's swift pitching; and Brown's play in facing Bond's difficult delivery was excellent. But the best average catching of the season was that done by Flint of the Indianapolis nine, on whose splendid catching half of Nolan's pitching reputation was built. The weakest catching display in League club teams was that of McVey, whose failure to give Bradley the requisite support, led to the loss of the championship by the Chicago team.

A drawback to the creditable work in the catcher's position in 1877 was the growing and grumbling at umpires' decisions, and the habit of "chucking" generally, which was indulged in by McVey, Anson, Higham and that class of growing players. If not put a stop to by club managers it will result in the clubs finding it impossible to get a competent gentleman to occupy the umpire's position in 1878. Umpires have an onerous duty to attend to, and a most unpleasant task under the best of circumstances, but with growing